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IGNATIAN RETREATS

IGNATIAN RETREATS

Three Retreats for Lay People

according to the method and plan of the Spiritual Exercises

BY

W. H. LONGRIDGE, S.S.J.E.

A. R. MOWBRAY & CO. LTD.
LONDON : 28 Margaret Street, Oxford Circus, W.1
OXFORD : 9 High Street
MILWAUKEE, U.S.A. : The Morehouse Publishing Co.
Printed in England

271.5
Ig5Yc
80892

First impression, 1926

NEW YORK
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PREFACE

THE three Retreats contained in this volume are intended primarily for lay people who, by choice or of necessity, make their retreat alone under the direction of a priest. But it is hoped that they may also be useful to conductors of corporate retreats, as illustrating the way in which the *Spiritual Exercises* of S. Ignatius may be adapted to comparatively short retreats.

The first two retreats are of four days each, the third, of six. If these should be found too long for any particular retreatant or group of retreatants, they may be shortened by the omission of some of the meditations, without disturbing the proper sequence of subjects. I have indicated, in each case, how this may be done.

In the third and longest of the three the question of a possible vocation to the priesthood or to the religious life is definitely suggested for the consideration of the retreatant.

Certain subjects must of necessity have a place in every Ignatian retreat, and therefore the titles of some of the meditations in these retreats are identical or nearly so, but the treatment of them in each case is different.

Besides the meditations, I have added two Appendices, the first containing six Instructions to be given to the retreatant at the discretion of the priest who is directing the retreat; the second consisting of some portions of the text of S. Ignatius, which will help the retreatant to a better understanding of the meaning and purpose of the meditations on the Foundation, the Kingdom of Christ, the Two Standards, and the Three Classes of Men. They may be given to the retreatant along with each of these meditations, to be read by him beforehand.

The retreats are published in three forms: (1) all three together in one volume, intended more especially for the use of retreat conductors; (2) each retreat by itself in a

separate volume; (3) each retreat in an envelope, with its meditations printed as detached leaflets to be given one by one to the retreatant.

The two Appendices, though required for use with each of the retreats, are printed only in the complete volume containing all the three retreats, and with the first of the retreats published separately, so that those who prefer to have the retreats in separate volumes or as leaflets will not have to buy the Appendices more than once.

Some advantages of publishing the meditations in leaflet form are the following :—

1. It will be more in accordance with the intention of S. Ignatius if the meditations are put into the hands of the retreatant one by one rather than all together in a book. For the Saint wishes the retreatant to be wholly occupied with the meditation he has to make at the moment and not to have his attention distracted by knowing what is to follow (see the *Spiritual Exercises*, Annotation xi, Observation 1, at the end of the first day of the Second Week, and *Directory* III, 1–5).

2. When it is necessary to shorten any of the retreats by the omission of some of the meditations, it will be possible to give to the retreatant only those meditations which he is to use.

3. It will be possible to vary the retreats considerably by interchanging some of the meditations of each, provided always that the proper sequence of subjects is preserved. Any priest who has studied the *Spiritual Exercises* will easily be able to make suitable transpositions.

I desire to acknowledge my debt in some of these meditations to the oral teaching of Father Benson and Father O'Neill of the Society of S. John the Evangelist, to notes of an Instruction given by the late Bishop Wilkinson when Vicar of S. Peter's, Eaton Square, to a printed sermon of Dr. Liddon's, and to notes of two meditations given in a retreat by Dr. Ottley, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford.

W. H. L.

OXFORD,
June, 1926.

INTRODUCTION

THE *Spiritual Exercises* of S. Ignatius are intended primarily for use in retreat. More particularly their purpose is defined in the title : ' Spiritual Exercises whereby to conquer oneself, and order one's life, without being influenced in one's decision by any inordinate affection.' To order one's life according to the will of God, that is the purpose which the retreatant should have in view. He comes into retreat either to consider the question of his vocation, and to choose advisedly a state of life, whether it be the priesthood, or the religious life, or the ordinary life in the world ; or to reform, if need be, and to order his life in a state already chosen and fixed ; or simply to seek a renewal of fervour and to make progress in spiritual life. One or other of these objects must be the purpose of every retreat that is made according to the plan and method of S. Ignatius.

The Exercises are divided into four parts or ' Weeks ' as they are called. These are not fixed periods of seven days each, but successive stages through which the soul passes ; and each may be shortened or lengthened according as the retreatant more or less quickly gains the fruit proper to each. To make the Exercises fully, as they are laid down in the book, would require about a month ; but they may be shortened and adapted to retreats lasting only for a week, or even less. The several ' Weeks ' correspond roughly to the familiar division of the spiritual life into the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways.

The course opens with the consideration of the end of man and of creatures. This is called the Principle and Foundation, because from it are deduced all the practical truths which the subsequent Exercises teach, and upon it is built the whole fabric of the spiritual life, as S. Ignatius conceives it.

Then in the First Week, which corresponds to the purgative way, we are led to meditate upon sin and its consequences, in order that we may be thoroughly humbled in

shame and contrition, while at the same time our hearts are moved to wonder and gratitude, as we realize the mercy and forbearance of God in sparing us till now, and giving us time for repentance and amendment.

The Second Week, which, with the Third, belongs to the illuminative way, is introduced with the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, in which we contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Captain of our salvation, calling all men to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil. S. Ignatius says that this meditation will help us to contemplate the life of our Lord with profit. It will do this, because it will kindle in our hearts personal love and loyalty to Him as our Leader, and a desire and purpose to follow Him as closely as possible, cost what it may. And this is exactly the spirit and temper of mind in which we are to make all our meditations on the mysteries of His life and passion. We are to consider in all of them what Christ our Lord chose for Himself as the most perfect way of glorifying His Father, and what He would have us choose in order that we may follow Him most closely in whatever kind or state of life He may call each one of us to serve Him. Thus, while we meditate upon our Lord's life and teaching, we are to be on the watch for anything that may reveal to us what is our own vocation, or, if that is settled, what step onward towards perfection in our present state of life our Lord desires us to take.

To help us in this quest, S. Ignatius interjects in the course of our meditations three very important Exercises, which are intended to be an immediate preparation for making a good and sound Election.[1] These are the Two Standards, the Three Classes, and the Three Modes of Humility. If rightly made, they will help us to see more clearly what is our Lord's will for us, and at the same time to rid ourselves of any inordinate affections that may hinder us in obeying it. Then, after all this preparation, the Second Week ends with the Election itself.

In the Third Week, which is devoted to the contemplation of the Passion, we strengthen ourselves in our resolution,

[1] i.e. the choice, according to the will of God, of a state of life, or the decision of some other grave and important matter. In most retreats a resolution will take the place of the Election.

and prepare for all it may cost us, by contemplating the steadfastness, courage, and patience of our Lord in all His overwhelming sufferings and humiliations, even to the death of the Cross ; while, at the same time, we deepen our contrition by the consideration that all this was endured for our own personal sins ; and in grateful love we ask, each one of us, What ought I not only *to do*, but also *to suffer* for Him, who so ' loved me and gave Himself for me ' ?

In the Fourth Week, which pertains to the unitive way, we contemplate our risen and glorified Lord. We rejoice with Him in His great triumph and joy, and gather hope and courage for ourselves, who are called even now to live in the power of His resurrection, while we look forward to share His manifested glory hereafter in heaven.

Then, to crown all, S. Ignatius gives us an Exercise which he calls a ' Contemplation for obtaining Love.' We love God, because He first loved us, and has given us lavishly of what is His. All that we are and have is His gift : in response then to His love we can but give Him back what He has given us. ' Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all I have and possess. Thou hast given all this to me : to Thee, O Lord, I restore it ; all is Thine, dispose of it entirely according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and grace, for this is enough for me.'

It is interesting to note that the outline of the course of the Exercises is already traced for us in the Epistle to the Hebrews : ' Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author (or Captain, R.V. marg.) and Perfecter of our faith ; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God ' (chap. xii. 1, 2).

In conclusion, it should be remembered that the Exercises are designed especially for persons who are considering a possible vocation to the religious life, or who have already entered upon it and desire to press on to greater perfection in it. To these alone, as a general rule, they are to be given in all their completeness. But it is legitimate and profitable to give them in part or with some modifications to many

others, e.g. those who merely wish to set their consciences in order by a good confession, and to make a simple rule of life, which may help them to persevere in grace ; or those, again, who, coming into retreat year by year, desire to make progress in spiritual life, according to their several callings and circumstances. For we must not forget that S. Ignatius teaches that the very highest perfection of spiritual life is open to lay people, no less than to priests and religious.

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O Good Jesu, hear me ;
Within Thy wounds hide me ;
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee ;
From the malignant enemy defend me :
In the hour of my death call me,
And bid me come to Thee,
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee
For ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of S. Ignatius

Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all I have and possess. Thou hast given all this to me : to Thee, O Lord, I restore it ; all is Thine, dispose of it entirely according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and grace, for this is enough for me.

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RETREAT I

Retreat I. Meditation I.

THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF A RETREAT

I. The Object of a Retreat

1. *To take account of yourself*—to see the ground and ruling principle of your life.

2. *To discern what has been amiss in it*—past sins and failures.

3. *To see what God would have you do now* so as to put your life in order, to direct it to the right end. To see, it may be, what is God's vocation for you. How can you best serve Him and save your soul? As a layman? As a priest? In missionary work? In the religious life?

II. Means to attain this Object

1. *Solitude*, i.e. coming apart from your ordinary life in the world, your family, friends, occupations, surroundings.

2. *Silence*, (1) exterior, (2) interior, i.e. putting away all other thoughts; listening for the voice of God.

3. *Custody of the senses*, especially the eyes and ears. Distractions enter so easily by these.

4. *Penitence*—to purify your soul that you may see God, and know His will for you; therefore self-examination and confession.

5. *Meditation.* Ponder and pray, especially the latter. Do not spend all the time in thinking, but pray much. If a single point gives you sufficient food for reflection and

prayer do not be in a hurry to pass on. 'In the point in which I find that which I desire, there I will rest, without being anxious to proceed further, until I have satisfied myself. . . . For it is not the abundance of knowledge which fills and satisfies the soul, but to feel and taste the matters interiorly' (*S. Ignatius*).

6. *Free time.* Choose one book for the companion of your solitude, a spiritual book, or a biography. Consult on this matter the priest in charge of your retreat. Preserve the spirit of the retreat, i.e. solitude and recollection, even when resting or taking exercise in the garden.

7. *Be open with your director.* God has appointed him to be your guide and helper in your retreat.

III. Dispositions necessary for a good Retreat

1. *Desire of conversion, or of spiritual advance.* Desire to know what God would have you do.

2. *Faith.* It is God who has called you into this retreat. He has His purpose for you. He desires to give you some blessing. Trust yourself to Him, for time and for eternity.

3. *Courage and generosity towards God.* Be ready to do whatever He may show you to be His will for you. 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee. Do with me what Thou wilt, for I know that Thou lovest me.'

IV. Temptations to guard against during Retreat

1. *Allowing yourself to be put out or irritated by any of the arrangements,* e.g. your room, the food, cold or heat, etc. If the Cross enters in any way into the retreat, it will make the fruit of it the surer and the richer.

2. *Criticism.* If the meditations do not come up to your expectation, if they seem dry and uninteresting, remember they are what God has provided for you. If you accept them thus, you will be sure to find them helpful.

3. *Dreaming.* Mere enjoyment, intellectual or spiritual. Do not rest in this. Be practical : apply all to yourself. The retreat should lead to the reformation of your life, to some practical resolutions which shall be for the glory of God and your own spiritual advance.

4. *Dryness and desolation.* Be patient and humble. Keep yourself in the presence of God. Look up to Him as a beggar asking alms. Often we gain most when we least know it.

5. *Sloth.* The retreat is very short ; therefore begin in earnest, and at once. Do not waste any part of it. Persevere in spiritual effort. If through sloth you miss its blessing, it is a loss for eternity.

V. Final Thoughts

1. Suppose this retreat were to be your preparation for death ! It might be so. If you knew it was to be so, how would you make it ? A retreat well made ought to leave us prepared for death.

2. Encouragement. It is God who has called you into this retreat. He wants to set you right with Himself ; to give you some blessing. You will not fail of it if you look to Him. Those that seek will surely find.

Therefore, to-night, pray God to bless your retreat, and to help you to make it really well.

Imitation of Christ, I. xx ; III. xxiii.

THE PURPOSE OF MY CREATION

'MAN was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.'

Prel. i. Place yourself in the presence of God and adore His Divine Majesty.

Prel. ii. Ask for grace to know the purpose of your creation, to have it constantly before your mind, and to live accordingly.

I. GOD IS MY CREATOR

1. Where and what was I a hundred years ago? If I carry my imagination back, I see the world with its teeming population, my native land, the home perhaps where I was born; but I—where and what was I? I was nothing—less than a stone or a blade of grass; for they at least had an existence, and I had none.

2. But now I exist. I have a place and interest in the world, and manifold relations with it. And this existence, whence came it? Of myself? No, I had no choice in the matter. I was not asked whether I would choose to be or not. Chance? There is no such thing. My parents? They were only the mediate instruments which God used to give me being. God, then, was the real Author of my being. I come from Him. 'Thy hands, O Lord, have made me and fashioned me' (*Job* x. 8). Thou hast called me out of nothingness, and made me what I am.

3. Let me consider then :—

God created me out of pure love. He had no need of me. I was not necessary to His eternal joy and happiness. But in love He called me into being that I might share His happiness. Love, then, was the moving cause of my creation.

The decree of my creation was from everlasting. From all eternity God thought of me, and purposed to bring me in due time into being. While yet unborn I had a place in the mind and heart of the eternal God.

God created me with an individual love and purpose. He has for me a particular place to fill, a particular work to

do, a particular return of love to make. If I refuse or fail Him, He must create another to fill the place which I have forfeited.

God created me, and by creation made me among the noblest of His creatures, in His own image, and with a destiny higher than that of the angels.

God created me, and moment by moment He sustains my life. 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being' (*Acts* xvii. 28). If He were to withdraw His upholding power, I should fall back at once into the nothingness whence I came.

II. God created me for Himself

1. As God is an intelligent Being, He must have had some purpose in creating me, and that purpose must be worthy of Himself. He could not create me for any end less than Himself—to know Him, love Him, and serve Him here, and so to attain to everlasting happiness with Him hereafter.

2. Everything within me and around me bears witness to this truth :—

My faith. It tells me that God made all things for Himself. 'All things were created by Him, and for Him' (*Col.* i. 16). The first and greatest commandment is this, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind' (*S. Luke* x. 27).

My reason and my heart. They tell me that there must be some proportion between the faculties of man and their object. But the mind and heart of man crave for a perfection and a love which are infinite. Nothing but the Truth, the Beauty, the Goodness, the Love of God can satisfy this desire which God has implanted in me. 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee' (*S. Augustine*).

The creatures—all that is around me in the world. They tell me by their imperfection, their inconstancy, their transitory character, that they are far too poor and weak and uncertain to satisfy me. 'The world passeth away, and

the lust thereof' (1 *S. John* ii. 17). 'Vanity of vanities' is written upon all these transitory things.

My experience. It tells me that when I have made God my end, when I have sought to love and serve Him, peace has dwelt in my soul. On the other hand, when I have gone astray in self-will and sin, I have found nothing but unrest and remorse. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked' (*Isa.* lvii. 20, 21).

III. The Love and Service of God

1. *This is the one thing needful.* All else is unimportant compared with this. Riches, honours, popularity, success, a name and position in society—none of these are essential. My end is not dependent upon such things as these. I can love and serve God and save my soul without them. They are not the sources of true peace and happiness, even in this present life.

2. *It is the one thing that can ennoble my life and give me true freedom.* If I make myself or any other creatures my end, I degrade myself and become a slave to myself or to them. My greatness is not to be found in these things, but in my relation to God and to the things which are eternal. To make God my end, to serve Him—'*Cui servire regnare est*' ('Whose service is perfect freedom')—here is my true greatness, here is true liberty.

3. *It is the one thing that can make me really happy.* In the love and service of God I shall find happiness in this present life. My heart will find satisfaction. My conscience will be at rest. God will make all things work together for my good (*Rom.* viii. 28). And I shall be happy with Him hereafter for ever. He will be my 'exceeding great reward' (*Gen.* xv. 1).

4. *It is for me to choose.* On the one side is my true happiness here, and heaven with its joys hereafter. On the other, a restless tossing to and fro, desires unsatisfied, a conscience ill at ease; and all my unrest and unhappiness

now will be only the prelude to the endless, hopeless misery of a soul that has failed to attain its end and is lost for ever.

So let me meditate upon the end of my creation. God is my beginning : I come from Him. God is my end : I was created for Him, to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him. This love and service of God is the one thing needful.

Think what you must do if you would not frustrate this purpose of your creation ; what you must part with if you would not part with God ; what you must love if you would respond to His great love for you.

My God, I am not my own, but Thine ; take me for Thine own, and make me in all things to do Thy holy will. O my God, I give myself to Thee, for joy or for sorrow, for sickness or for health, for life or for death, for time and for eternity. Make me and keep me Thine own, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Imitation of Christ, III. ix ; x.

THE END AND RIGHT USE OF CREATURES

After speaking of the end of man S. Ignatius continues, 'And the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and in order to aid him in the attainment of the end for which he was created.'

Prel. i. Contemplate God, in His providence ordering all things with infinite wisdom and love for the good of each individual soul.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may use all creatures to the glory of God, and for the sanctification and salvation of your soul.

I. The End of Creatures

By creatures, i.e. 'the other things on the face of the earth,' S. Ignatius means not only creatures in the ordinary sense of the word, viz. the various objects of this visible world, whether animate or inanimate, but also all events, circumstances, states and conditions of life, all the arrangements of God's providence, all, whether good or evil, pleasurable or painful, which makes up the environment of our life, all in fact which is distinct from our own personality and God.

It is true that God made nothing evil or painful, but many things which were good in themselves have become evil and painful to us because of the disorder brought into our nature and into the world by sin. Still, even these things may be said to be creatures of God because they have now entered into the new order of His providential government of the world, and He uses them for His purposes. They are for our trial and discipline. They help us to practise mortification and submission, patience, faith, and many other virtues.

All creatures, then, understanding the word in this wide sense, were created by God *for man's sake*, to minister to his wants, his pleasures, his education, and development; and so to aid him in the prosecution of his end, the love and service of God, and the salvation of his soul.

Let me apply this truth to myself. Every circumstance of my life, everything that happens to me or affects me, is, in God's purpose, the very best that could be for the fulfilment of my end. All has been arranged or is overruled by God for this purpose. Therefore if I am wise and dutiful, I shall be contented with what He arranges for me—the place where I live, the family and station in which I was born, the occupation to which God has called or is calling me, the talents, amount of money, health, friends, etc., He has given me; my gains and losses, joys and sorrows, difficulties and temptations; for all these are creatures of God, and are intended by Him to help me to love and serve Him and save my soul. With the exception of sin there is nothing within me or around me, nothing that can happen to me, which may not be used by me for God's glory and my own sanctification.

What rest and contentment, what trust and security, it will give me, if I really believe and act upon this truth, accepting and using all creatures as God's gift to me to help me to attain my end. It would be folly to think that I could arrange things better than God, if I had the choice. What is my wisdom compared to His? What is my love of myself compared with His love of me? What is any idea of perfection I could form for myself compared with the perfection which God designs for me, and to which He will surely lead me if I give myself up with trustful self-surrender to the discipline which He appoints for me! 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose' (*Rom.* viii. 28).

II. The Right Use of Creatures

Creatures will help me only if I use them rightly, according to the will and purpose of God: to use them wrongly will be my ruin.

S. Ignatius tells me how to use them rightly. 'I must use them just so far as they help me to attain my end, and withdraw myself from them just so far as they hinder me.'

The right attitude, then, towards creatures is twofold—to *use* them or to *withdraw* from them.

1. *To use them, so far as they help me to attain my end.*
Some creatures are necessary to my existence and well-being, e.g. food, shelter, clothing, sleep. I must make use of these just so far as they help me in the pursuit of my end. If I go beyond this they will become hindrances instead of helps. I shall be in danger of becoming enslaved to them as the drunkard to his appetite, the miser to his money.

Some creatures are left more or less to my choice, e.g. a state of life, single or married, the priesthood, the religious life, such and such a profession, business, or trade; and some to my own efforts to obtain them, e.g. wealth, honour, fame, success. The rule with regard to all these is that I should consider them as means and not as ends. Therefore I must not make choice of any one of them till I have first considered whether, and how far, it will help or hinder me in the love and service of God and the salvation of my soul.

2. *To withdraw myself from them so far as they hinder me.*
Directly I find that any creature—a friend, a pleasure, a place, a book—is hindering my love and service of God, I must withdraw myself from it, i.e. I must give it up either entirely, or so far as it is doing me harm and coming between me and God. By so doing I am really using it for the attainment of my end; for my surrender of it is both an act of love and obedience to God, and an occasion of practising that self-denial without which I cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

How often I have forgotten or ignored these rules. Instead of using creatures as *means* to help me in the love and service of God and the salvation of my soul, I have made them my end, using them only for my own pleasure and purposes, 'worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator' (*Rom.* i. 25).

III. Indifference

If I am to use creatures aright, i.e. only as means to my true end, I must 'make myself indifferent' in regard to them.

This does not mean that I am not to feel desire for some things and shrinking from others, but that I am so to moderate and rule these natural feelings that they shall not hinder my freedom to choose and act always according to conscience and the will of God. Indifference is not insensibility, but detachment and self-control. It means that the end for which I was created is of such paramount importance that everything else must be subordinated to it. When that is so, I shall be able to use creatures just so far as they help me to attain my end, and to withdraw from them or put them aside, or be content to be without them, when they are harmful; because, though they are attractive, there is something that I value more—the love of God and the salvation of my soul.

This indifference or detachment is necessary :—

1. *Because of the sovereign dominion of God.* All creatures belong to Him. I must use them according to His will and purpose, not my own. I am not their master, but only a steward, and one day I shall have to give account of my stewardship.

2. *Because of the providence of God.* He wills my sanctification (1 *Thess.* iv. 3), and knows better than I do what will best promote it. To refuse to accept what He sends me, or to leave the path He has marked out for me, may frustrate all His loving purpose for me. Therefore my will must be ready to conform itself to His.

3. *Because of my salvation.* All the perils which menace my salvation, from within and from without, may be reduced to one—the wrong use of creatures. Indifference will enable me to use them aright.

I must, then, *make myself indifferent,* so far as to be able to use creatures not according to my own wayward impulses, but according to the will of God. This will take time and effort. I must bend my will again and again to the will of God, so that at last I shall come to want only what God wants. Then I shall be able to use all creatures aright, as means to the attainment of my end, the love and service of God and the salvation of my soul.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxvi; xxvii; xxxviii.

THE SIN OF THE ANGELS AND OF ADAM

We have thought of the end of man and of creatures. Now we are to think of that which may be our ruin—sin ; our turning away from our true end, the love and service of God ; our wrong use of creatures. And in order that we may learn to hate and fear sin as the greatest of all evils, we will meditate upon the terrible ruin it has wrought (1) in the fallen angels, (2) in man.

Prel. i. The apostate angels cast down from heaven, and doomed to suffer hereafter the vengeance of eternal fire (*S Matt.* xxv. 41). Adam and Eve, driven forth from Paradise (see *Gen.* iii). (Though the details of this narrative are probably to be interpreted allegorically rather than literally, yet they are in marvellous agreement with the facts of experience. Adam is the representative of the human race. The story of his temptation and fall has a universal significance, and shows each man, as in a mirror, his own experience.)

Prel. ii. Ask for a holy fear of sin, seeing how terrible are its consequences. By a single sin both the angels and Adam fell; how many times have I deserved that God should cast me off!

I. The Sin of the Angels

1. *The angels before their sin.*

(*a*) The glory of their nature. Pure spirits. Endowed with glorious gifts of intellect, and wills free to choose the praise and service of God.

(*b*) Their dwelling-place. In heaven, though not yet enjoying the Beatific Vision of God, which would have made sin impossible. No creature can be admitted to that Vision till after probation.

(*c*) Their destiny. A moment's trial of their loyalty and obedience, and they would have been established for ever in the love and service of God.

2. *Their sin.*

(*a*) It was a sin of pride. Dazzled by their own glorious nature and gifts, they forgot that they were created out of nothing, to praise, reverence, and serve God. They made themselves their end, chose to be independent of God, to use their gifts for their own glory instead of God's.

(*b*) It was a single sin, committed in a moment, and their first sin.

(*c*) It was a spiritual sin. Spiritual sins such as pride, envy, anger, self-will, hypocrisy, may often be more deadly, because more inward and deep-seated, than sins of the flesh.

3. *Their punishment.*

(*a*) It was immediate. No time for repentance was granted. Perhaps repentance is impossible for an angel's nature.

(*b*) Most terrible. They were cast out of heaven—their glory turned into shame, their love into hatred. The greatness of their capacity is the measure of their ruin and their torment.

(*c*) Eternal. No hope of restoration. They have lost God, heaven, hope, love, for ever.

4. *Let me consider some warnings for myself.*

(*a*) I may lose my soul anywhere. The angels sinned in heaven ; where, then, can I be safe ?

(*b*) Great gifts may be a great danger, if they lead to pride, if I use them for my own glory and not for God.

(*c*) I may be free from sins of the flesh, but a spiritual sin, a sin of the heart and mind, is sufficient to estrange me from God, and may cause the ruin of my soul.

(*d*) As I meditate upon the angels' sin, I see that one mortal sin may be the eternal ruin of a soul, a sin committed in a moment, a sin which is only in the heart and will.

(*e*) The angels sinned but once. What ought I not to fear after my many sins—sins of every kind, committed again and again ? O my God, what if my next mortal sin should be the filling up of the measure of my iniquity ! What if it should be the last time Thou wilt suffer me to outrage Thy holiness, Thy justice, Thy forbearance, and Thy mercy !

II. The Sin of our First Parents

1. *Adam and Eve before their sin.*

(*a*) The perfection in which they were created. Their bodies free from sickness and decay. Their appetites subject to the control of reason. Their souls bright with the glory of supernatural grace, so that they lived in joyous communion with God as His children.

(*b*) The place of their abode. The earthly paradise. All nature subject to them, ministering to their enjoyment, and helping them to fulfil their end—the love and service of God.

(*c*) Their destiny. After a happy life in the earthly paradise to be translated to heaven, there to enjoy for ever the vision of God. But their obedience must first be tested. So God gave them one command—to abstain from the fruit of one tree, and warned them of the consequences of transgression. Their abstinence from this one tree was to be the trial of their faith and obedience, their acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God.

2. *Their sin.*

(*a*) Eve listened to the devil, parleyed with him, was deceived by him, took of the fruit and ate. Then she gave of it to Adam and he also ate.

(*b*) It was a sin of unbelief. The devil slandered the truth and goodness of God: 'Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' Eve listened when she should have turned away. Her faith in God was shaken.

(*c*) When faith was shaken, the tree itself became a temptation. She saw that it was 'good for food, pleasant to the eyes.' The desires which God had implanted in her became perverted into evil lusts—'the lust of the flesh and of the eyes' (1 *S. John* ii. 16). The devil told her it would make her wise, would open her eyes to new knowledge. So evil curiosity was awakened. She desired to taste this forbidden knowledge. 'Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin' (*S. Jas.* i. 15), and having sinned herself, Eve became the temptress of Adam

3. *The consequences of their sin.*

(*a*) To themselves. Shame and fear : they tried to hide themselves from God.

(*b*) Death : their souls died at once, for they lost the grace of God which is the life of the soul ; their bodies also came under sentence of death. They were driven from paradise. The ground was cursed. Though God gave them the grace of penitence and pardon, yet they must linger on through a long life of penance in toil and sorrow.

(*c*) To others. The whole human race was involved in their sin and its consequences (*Rom.* v. 12). All are born in sin, without that spiritual life of grace which Adam's sin had forfeited.

(*d*) But this is not all. Think how many have lived and died in their sins, and are now among the lost.

4. *Meditate upon all this, and learn :—*

(*a*) Not to judge of sin by its apparent littleness. How little did Adam and Eve know what widespread misery and ruin would result from that seemingly little act of disobedience. Therefore never let me think or say, 'This sin is so small, no serious harm will come of it. I will do it just this once only.' If I know it to be a sin, that is enough : I dare not do it.

(*b*) If Adam's sin had such far-reaching consequences, how can I tell where the results of any sin of mine may end? Some sins may bear deadly fruit in the ruin of other souls long after I am gone.

(*c*) Lastly, let me compare my sin with the sin of Adam and Eve. On their side it was a single sin, committed before they had any experience of sin's deadly fruit, a sin repented of at once, and expiated by so long a penance. On my part, so many sins—sins committed in a body and soul redeemed by Christ, indwelt by the Holy Ghost—sins committed in the light of the Cross, the love of God, and our Lord's warnings about hell—sins for which I have had so little penitence, which perhaps I have never yet repented of at all.

Imitation of Christ, III. iv ; viii ; lii.

THE DEATH OF A SOUL IN MORTAL SIN

PREL. i. At this very moment, while I make this meditation, there are probably lost souls that have sinned less than I have; among them perhaps a soul that is condemned for one mortal sin.

Let me think of such a one—the soul of one of my own age, who had lived in circumstances very like my own. And now that soul is among the lost, and this is the result of one mortal sin.

Prel. ii. Grant, O Lord, that if ever in strong temptation I forget the love I owe Thee, at least the fear of hell may keep me from mortal sin.

I. THIS SOUL BEFORE ITS SIN

Once it was pure from all stain of sin. It was the day of its baptism. Think of its beauty then in the eyes of God and the holy angels; washed in the Blood of Jesus, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Think of God's immense love for it—of all the possibilities of a holy life contained in that seed of divine life and sanctifying grace implanted in it. If that child had died then, it would now have been with God for ever. Or if it had lived and been true to the grace which God gave it, it might have grown to be a very holy soul, and acquired much merit and a great reward. But instead of that it sinned mortally, and in that sin unrepented it died, and is now a lost soul.

Consider the history of this soul. Perhaps it had preserved baptismal grace in childhood, and had passed through school days without any grave sin. Perhaps there were times when it had a real love for God. These times it remembers still, Confirmation, first Confession, Communions. But as time went on it grew careless. Prayers were neglected; dangerous occasions of sin not avoided, sometimes even eagerly sought; temptations not resisted; grace was weakened, and conscience dulled. Then came strong temptation to some deadly sin, and the soul

yielded and fell; and with the guilt of that sin upon it unrepented of, it passed into eternity and is now among the lost.

Or was its history different? Was it a soul that had sinned deeply and often—lived for long periods in habits of deadly sin? But God gave it the grace of penitence; not once only but many times after many relapses. Time after time He restored it by absolution. But grace was abused, and there came at last a relapse without recovery, and in that sin it died and is lost. Each soul, we may be sure, is given sufficient time and grace for repentance and salvation; but if, in spite of this, it continues in sin, there may be reached at last a point at which it has become so fixed in evil that repentance is impossible.

II. What this Soul is now

If even at the last this soul had yielded to the love of God and repented it would have been saved. It would have possessed God for ever. Now it is for ever deprived of the sight and possession of Him who is its end and only good.

It would have been at rest among the holy dead in the place of purification and peace, and one day it would have been in heaven along with saints and angels. Now it will be for ever in the company of devils and the lost.

It would have been clothed with glory; now it is in 'outer darkness,' condemned to 'shame and everlasting contempt' (*S. Matt.* viii. 12; *Dan.* xii. 2).

It would have been inundated with love and joy unspeakable; now it is tormented with hopeless remorse, the 'worm that dieth not' (*S. Mark* ix. 44), and must suffer never-ending misery and despair.

It would have lived for ever in heaven to love and bless God, its Creator, Father, Redeemer, Sanctifier; now it can only hate Him and rebel against Him through the ages of eternity.

If this soul had responded to the grace of God it might, in spite of all its sins, have been saved. Absolution, or perhaps even before absolution perfect contrition, might have restored it to the friendship of God. Like Mary

Magdalene or S. Augustine and many other saints, it might have made the memory of its sins, and of God's goodness in sparing it, the motive for a life of fervent love and unwearied service. But grace was abused. The soul hardened itself against the love of God, and now it is a lost soul for ever.

III. Let me turn from Thinking of Another to Myself

Let me think of the first time I committed a mortal sin. Why did not God cut me off after that first sin? Why has He borne with me till now, in spite of so many grievous sins committed since then? What was there in me that He should show such mercy and forbearance towards me? What has my life been but sin upon sin? If I look back over my life, where do I not find memories of sin—in my home as a child—in the schools I went to—in all the various scenes of my work and play—in all the places I have lived in since—[at the University—in the shelter of this place where I have come to prepare for ordination]—alone or with others—by day or by night? If I think of God's commandments, which of them have I not broken? If I examine the senses of my body and the faculties of my soul, with which of them have I not sinned—sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, my hands, my feet, my tongue, my understanding, my affections, my will? How many sins have I committed with each of these?

And yet God has spared me through all! If death had overtaken me while I was still living in sin, I should now be among the lost. Perhaps I have sinned more deeply and more often than some who are already doomed. What if my next wilful sin should be the filling up of my iniquity, and for me there should be no more time or grace for repentance!

But to-day God offers me His grace. To-day I may repent, and make my confession, and receive absolution. Oh, the depth of the goodness and mercy of God, 'long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (2 *S. Pet.* iii. 9).

Thus, then, let me meditate upon the death of a soul in mortal sin ; and while I thank God for sparing me hitherto, let me be afraid to go on adding sin to sin. In my prayer I will ask for a holy fear of hell, for true repentance for the past, and a firm purpose of never offending God again by mortal sin.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiv.

THE FORBEARANCE AND MERCY OF GOD

PREL. i. Think of the holiness, majesty, and power of God ; of His hatred of sin. And then think of the wonder of His patience and forbearance with us. The angels sinned but once. Swift, in a moment, came their punishment, and it was for ever. How many times have I sinned, and yet God has had patience with me, and bears with me still.

Prel. ii. Thank God for His forbearance and long-suffering towards you, and pray that you may not abuse it.

I. GOD'S PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE

1. This is something that only I myself can measure. None but myself knows what my inward history has been—the graces heaped upon me, and yet my many sins ; the oft-repeated forgiveness, and yet my frequent relapses and fresh rebellions ; the sweet caresses of God's love, and yet my coldness in His service. Yet still He bears with me, and has not allowed the unfruitful tree to be cut down.

2. Or think again : I am still here on earth, still in the Church, still with the means of grace and the hope of heaven ; while many, perhaps less guilty than myself, are already in hell. Still God gives me life, touches my heart and conscience with good inspirations, gives me the opportunity of this retreat.

3. What is the reason of all this ? It is because God sees me not merely as I am, but as I am capable of becoming. Deep down in me, perhaps almost hidden from myself, He sees the Christ-life implanted in me at Baptism ; and though so neglected, so marred by my manifold sins, still capable of growth and development according to His predestined purpose for me.

II. GOD'S SEEKING LOVE

The first movement comes from God, from the changeless love of the Father's heart. 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son' (*S. John* iii. 16). 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and

sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 *S. John* iv. 10). 'God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (*Rom.* v. 8).

Behold this love manifested in Christ, in the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (*S. Luke* xix. 10).

Think of Him as the Good Shepherd seeking the one lost sheep 'until He find it' (*S. Luke* xv. 4), and that lost sheep thyself. We never stray from Jesus in the rough ways of sin but He knows it, and His heart is touched with compassion for our misery and danger. He does not delay a moment to seek us. The remorse we feel, the longing that we had not sinned, the desire to repent and confess, is His voice, calling us back to Himself.

'He goeth after it.' Think what that going meant to Him. His coming down from heaven to take our nature, all the toils and sorrows of His earthly life, His passion and His death upon the Cross.

'Until He find it.' Never giving up the search, never shrinking from the suffering, loving us 'to the end.'

And still the Sacred Heart has the same love for each soul that has strayed and is lost. Still for each He would, if it were needed, come down again to earth and be crucified afresh.

Think of Him seeking sinners one by one: the woman of Samaria, Matthew the Publican, Zacchaeus, Peter after his denial. Think how He has sought thee in so many ways known only to thyself—strong drawings of His grace; gleams of happiness in His love, more satisfying than all the happiness of earth; sweetness He has sometimes given thee in prayer, and in Communion, and then again hiding Himself that thou mightest seek Him the more. Or on the other hand, stinging thy conscience, goading thee with fears, making thee feel the misery and restlessness of a heart that is not at rest in Him.

Think how He is seeking thee now in this retreat. If thou art a wanderer in sin, seeking to bring thee back in penitence; or if that stage is past, seeking to draw thee nearer to Himself in some closer embrace of love, some more intimate fellowship of life.

So meditate upon the seeking love of God, and then—

III. His Welcome of the Penitent

The first two parables of S. Luke xv set forth the seeking love of God; the third, that of the prodigal son, describes the rise and growth, in response to that love, of penitence in the heart of man. God's seeking love is set forth first, because He must first seek us before we can begin to seek Him.

We need not think now of the whole parable, but only of the latter part of it, God's welcome of the returning penitent.

'He came to himself . . . he arose and came to his father.' This is his conversion and his penitence. He came to make his confession, to show all his poverty and shame. But what a different experience it is from what he might have expected! He did not know how he would be received; whether he would be received at all, or only after long waiting; whether his father yet loved him or not.

How different is his reception from what he might have feared. While he is yet a great way off his father sees him, runs to meet him, falls on his neck and kisses him. The prodigal makes his confession with his head resting on his father's heart. 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' He was going to add, 'make me as one of thy hired servants'; but his father does not wait for that. At once, he bids the servants bring forth the 'best robe,' and put it on him, and a 'ring on his hand,' and 'shoes on his feet,' and 'bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.'

So think how God will welcome your penitence, and how it will bring to light again forgotten treasures, the best or first robe (*στολὴν τὴν πρώτην*), the white robe of baptismal purity and grace, lost by sin, restored by absolution; the ring, the sign that the penitent is united to Christ as His bride; the shoes, the symbol of readiness in the service of God, 'I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast set my heart at liberty' (*Ps.* cxix. 32); and the

feast, the Blessed Sacrament ; and the companionship of all in the Father's house, no longer a stranger and an outcast, but a ' fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God ' (*Eph.* ii. 19).

And then the joy : ' Let us eat and be merry.' This corresponds with calling the angels to rejoice in the other two parables : ' Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost.' So think what your penitence is to God, the joy of God, the joy of the angels in heaven.

Thus think of the forbearance and tender mercy of God. Thank Him for it. Thank Him that you are not now in hell, as you have so often deserved to be. Thank Him that He still gives you time and grace to repent and amend.

Thank Him too for His seeking love ; that He has sought you all your life, and is seeking you still.

And then think of His welcome of each returning penitent ; how surely He will meet and welcome your return, how easy He will make it, what joy it will give to Him, what joy to all the saints and angels in heaven.

Imitation of Christ, II. vi ; III. viii.

THE KINGDOM AND CALL OF CHRIST

At this point of the retreat, as we pass from the meditations of the purgative way to those of the illuminative, S. Ignatius would have us meditate upon the kingdom and the call of Christ, that we may be ready to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil.

The chief fruit we are to gain from this meditation is personal loyalty to Christ, and an ardent desire to follow Him in whatever way He may choose to make use of us, cost what it may. It should therefore be made in joy and elevation of spirit. We must bring to it something of the spirit of the Crusader, whom S. Ignatius doubtless had in mind when he made this meditation at Manresa, and drew out, in the first part of it, the similitude of the temporal king calling all men to follow him in his glorious enterprise.

Prel. i. Our Lord, the Captain of your salvation, calling you to follow Him.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace not to be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

I. A Similitude

Imagine a human king calling upon all who have brave and true hearts to follow him in some great and noble enterprise. (You might think of the Crusades of old, or of the call from King and Country which came to so many young men at the beginning of the Great War, 1914.) He attracts by the beauty of his character, and inspires confidence in every heart.

Yet there are toils and sufferings to be endured. Those who would follow must be ready to bear all the hardships and dangers of war. They must overcome their fears and their sloth. They must train themselves in all the exercises of warfare, and be determined to persevere to the end.

But their leader will go before them, and himself bear the brunt of every toil and danger. And the reward is sure. Each shall share the fruits of victory in proportion as he has shared in the sufferings and hardships of the campaign.

What ought every brave and true-hearted man to answer

to such a call? What should we think of any one who held back through cowardice or sloth?

II. The Reality

There is such a King, our Lord Jesus Christ, the great 'Captain of our salvation' (*Heb.* ii. 10).

Think of Him. He comes into the world to vanquish Satan and deliver mankind from his tyranny. He comes wearing our human nature, exposing Himself to all our weakness, temptations, and sufferings. Yet He is Divine, the Eternal Son of God. Though in the weakness of our mortal nature, He is strong and 'mighty to save' (*Isa.* lxiii. 1). Though He has suffered, in that suffering He has triumphed. He has overcome the world, and death, and Satan. 'I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death' (*Rev.* i. 18).

Imagine Him standing before you and saying, 'Which of you will follow Me?' Think how safely you may trust yourself to such a Leader. Consider:—

1. *His wisdom and knowledge.* They are the wisdom and knowledge of God. He knows your capacities, for He made you. He knows also your weakness and your dangers, and is able to succour you in all. He can make no mistake in what He calls you to do.

2. *His almighty power.* 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth' (*S. Matt.* xxviii. 18, 19). Victory is certain if you follow to the end.

3. *His unseen presence.* 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (ibid. 20). Though He reigns over all things from His throne in heaven, yet He is ever present with the least and humblest of His soldiers. You will fight, not in your own feebleness, but in the fullness of His communicated life and strength.

III. The Warfare to which He calls me

It is the greatest and noblest that can be imagined—to carry on His own work, sharing His labours and sufferings here, and His glory hereafter. It is:—

1. *To conquer myself.* Not the conquest of an earthly

kingdom, but the conquest of myself, the winning of my true liberty; not by any earthly warfare, but by moral and spiritual combats, which are harder and far more glorious.

The enemies against which I have to contend are the devil, the world, and the flesh. And of these it is the flesh, my corrupt nature with its unruly passions, which is the most dangerous, because it is the enemy within, who never leaves me or gives up the struggle. That is why the warfare is primarily a struggle with myself, my sensuality, self-love, pride, sloth, and love of pleasure. If I wage war against these I shall have far less to fear from the enemies without, the world, and the devil.

2. *To set up the kingdom of God in my own heart.* To let Christ reign there. To bring all my thoughts, my affections, my actions, into obedience to Him (2 *Cor.* x. 5). To follow His call and serve Him in whatever way He wishes to make use of me.

3. *To help Him to establish His kingdom in the hearts of others.* Our Lord wants my help to carry on His work. He says: 'I became man for your sake. I came into the world, and suffered, and died, and rose again, that I might free you from the tyranny of Satan and of sin, and bring you out of darkness into My kingdom of light and love. And now I invite you, I appeal to you, as My friend, to help Me in winning others to My kingdom. I need not only priests and religious, but lay apostles as well. They can often do what priests and religious cannot do. In the home, in society, in the office, in the workshop, there is so much needing to be done for God, and so few to do it. Will you not help Me?'

As I hear this call of Christ shall I not be prompt and eager to obey? Shall I not cast away everything that hinders me and keeps me back? Shall I not try first to conquer myself, to take Christ for my King and let Him reign in me, that so I may be able to win others also to His kingdom?

O Blessed Jesus, Captain of our salvation, fill my heart with Thine own zeal for the glory of God, Thine own burning love for souls. Set my heart free, that I may be able to help in bringing others also out of the bondage of sin, into the glorious liberty of Thine own kingdom of light and love.

IV. Motives which urge me to accept the Call of Christ

1. *He has a right to my service.* For He is my Creator and my Redeemer. I am not my own, but the purchase of His precious Blood (1 *Cor.* vi. 20). Yet He does not command or compel. He invites. He appeals to my sense of gratitude and chivalry, to all that is best and highest in me. He desires a willing service, not the service of a slave.

2. *It is the only honourable course to take.* To hold back is to make 'the great refusal,' to be stigmatized for ever as a coward and a renegade.

3. *It is the way of true freedom.* I must belong either to God or to the devil. There is no middle course. I cannot serve two masters. Nor can I be neutral. 'He that is not with Me is against Me' (*S. Matt.* xii. 30). I have only the choice of the one service or the other. Which of the two is the sweeter and the more honourable, the light yoke of Christ, or the hard bondage of sin? 'Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin' (*S. John* viii. 34). But to serve Christ is to be set free from sin; to be victorious over myself, the world, and the devil; to be independent of all creatures; to have no other Master but Him 'whose service is perfect freedom,' '*Cui servire regnare est.*'

4. *For me it is no longer an open question.* I am already pledged to this warfare by the vows of my baptism and confirmation. To refuse or to draw back would be to perjure myself, to part with all my interest in Christ, to lose my soul, to have my everlasting portion with His enemies.

Meditate thus upon the kingdom and the call of Christ. Consider your Captain and Leader; the warfare to which He calls you; and the motives which urge you to obey the call.

Renew your allegiance to Christ. Pray that you may have grace to fight manfully against sin, the world, and the devil; that you may set up Christ's kingdom in your own heart, and that you may do something to bring others also into it.

Collect, Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Imitation of Christ, I. 1.

THE HUMILITY OF THE INCARNATION

PREL. i. S. Bernard distinguishes between the *truth* and the *virtue* of humility. The truth enlightens the mind; the virtue inflames the heart. Philosophy may teach us the truth of our nothingness; but the virtue of humility is much more than this. It has its seat in the heart, and is learnt from Christ. 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart' (*S. Matt.* xi. 29). Jesus Christ is the true Teacher of this and every other virtue.

Prel. ii. Pray for a real love of humility, and for grace to learn it, as it is in Jesus.

I. OUR LORD THE MODEL OF HUMILITY

In the mystery of the Incarnation. 'The Word was made flesh' (*S. John* i. 14). He took not on Him the nature of angels, though that would have been an infinite condescension, but the seed of Abraham. He was made man. And still further, He took our nature in the weakness and humiliation of its fallen condition, subject to weariness, hunger and thirst, temptation, suffering of body and soul, and death. He came 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (*Rom.* viii. 3), 'in all things like unto His brethren' only 'without sin' (*Heb.* ii. 17; iv. 15).

Think also of S. Paul's statement of this mystery (*Phil.* ii. 5–8, R.V.): 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize (or thing to be held on to) to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.' He 'emptied Himself,' not indeed of His Divine Nature: that was impossible. But He surrendered, during His incarnate life on earth, the manifestation of 'the glory which He had with the Father before the world was' (*S. John* xvii. 5). Had He retained the state of glory which rightfully belonged to Him, He could not have carried out God's wise and loving purpose

for our redemption, nor could He have been to us an example of humility and other virtues we so greatly need to practise. And still further He humbled Himself, even as man, by 'becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross.'

Here are two points for meditation : (1) Jesus the model of humility in His Incarnation ; (2) Jesus the model of humility through the whole course of His earthly life, from His birth at Bethlehem to His death on the Cross. He chose to be born in poverty and obscurity, to live and labour as a poor man for thirty years, to be despised, rejected, scorned, spit upon, scourged, crucified. And in all this amazing humiliation, we are to be like Him. 'Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus.'

II. The Fruitfulness of Humility

The humility of the Son of God in laying aside all outward tokens of His glory, and taking upon Him 'the form of a servant,' has given more glory to God, and done more for our salvation—has been more attractive as an example, and the source of more abundant grace, than any conditions of majesty and power in which He could have shown Himself.

Let me meditate upon this, and learn, as regards myself, *the virtue and power of humility*. Whatever may be God's purpose for me, I may be quite sure that He can work nothing great, nothing solid or lasting, in me, or by me, except it be built upon the foundation of humility. As soon as I seek to exalt myself, I become nothing ; but when I am really humble I become, in God's hands, capable of everything. Humility alone can fit me to be an instrument by which He can work. The greatest gifts, attainments, labours, will fail of bearing true fruit, if through pride I rely upon them instead of God ; or if in using them I seek my own glory, reputation, satisfaction.

God has always chosen lowly souls to accomplish the greatest works : the lowly Virgin to be the mother of His Son ; poor fishermen to be His Apostles and convert the world. The Church spread first among the lower classes, the poor and the slaves. 'Not many wise men

after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called ; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty ; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things of no account, to bring to nought things that are ; that no flesh should glory in His presence' (1 *Cor.* i. 26–29).

On the other hand, how often has He withdrawn His grace from the proud and self-reliant, so that those who were apparently doing great works have fallen into heresy or sin, and have ended by making shipwreck of the faith altogether. Yes, let me be sure of this—no one can hope to persevere in the life of grace unless he is careful to cherish real humility. God gives grace to the humble, but withdraws it from the proud, and then sooner or later will come some terrible fall.

So let me meditate upon the fruitfulness of humility, and the necessity of preserving it in any work God may permit me to do for Him.

III. My own need of Humility

It is through the mystery of the Incarnation that I have been brought into the closest union with God, as a member of His Son Jesus Christ, and made, in Him, a 'partaker of the Divine Nature' (2 *Pet.* i. 4). *My exaltation is the fruit of His humiliation.*

Surely, then, I ought to be willing to humble myself in return for such grace bestowed upon me. I ought to love humility, and constantly to practise it. Yet how continually I fail ! When I meditate upon the humility of our Lord, I see its beauty and its power. I am inwardly touched and moved by it. But as soon as an occasion of imitating it arises, my pride rebels. Some little slight, perhaps only imaginary ; some little want of consideration I think due to me ; some preference of another ; and at once my pride is roused. I give way to anger, or if I repress the outward expression, still I brood upon it, and am filled with bitterness and resentment.

Is this the return I make to my Lord, who so humbled Himself for me? O Lord Jesus, Thou hast not disdained to lay aside Thy glory and take the form of a servant; Thou hast humbled Thyself to be born a little Child in weakness and dependence; Thou hast lived on earth in poverty and obscurity; Thou hast endured to be scorned and rejected by those Thou camest to save—and shall I still nourish my foolish pride, and refuse to bear even the smallest humiliations? Nay rather, teach me to love this virtue of humility, and to seek to learn it of Thee. And in order to begin now to learn it—

1. *I will check myself in criticism and harsh judgements of others.* These are often the outcome of my vanity and pride. I will begin by compelling myself to *say* kind things, even though my heart finds it difficult to go along with them. To kind words I will add little *acts* of kindness when possible. This will in time help me to have kinder *thoughts*.

2. *I will try to be patient* in bearing crosses, troubles, vexations, disappointments. This will greatly help to subdue self-love.

3. *I will accept, for the love of Jesus, little humiliations.* Humility cannot be gained without humiliations.

4. *I will often, in my prayer, contemplate the humility of Jesus,* and pray that He will pour into my heart the love of this virtue. Jesu, meek and lowly in heart, make my heart like unto Thine.

Collect, Palm Sunday.

Imitation of Christ, I. vii; III. viii, xiii.

TWO STANDARDS,

THE ONE OF CHRIST, OUR SUPREME CAPTAIN AND LORD; THE OTHER OF SATAN, THE MORTAL ENEMY OF OUR HUMAN NATURE.

THE purpose of this meditation is not that we may choose under which standard we will serve. We are already enlisted under the standard of Christ. Now we are to study the warfare itself, the two leaders, their characters, their aims, and the means which each uses for his purpose.

Prel. i. The two hostile leaders, each of them desiring to draw all men to his standard.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace to know the snares of Satan, and to avoid them; and on the other hand for knowledge of the true life which Christ reveals, and for grace to be faithful to Him.

I. CONSIDER THE TWO LEADERS IN THE WARFARE

S. Ignatius bids us picture to ourselves, on the one hand, 'how the chieftain of all the enemy seats himself in the midst of that great plain of Babylon, as on a lofty throne of fire and smoke—horrible and terrible to behold'; and on the other, 'how Christ our Lord takes His stand on a great plain near Jerusalem, in a lowly place, fair and gracious to behold.'

These two pictures are symbolical. They symbolize first the real characters of the two leaders; and secondly, the effects produced in the souls of those who yield to their respective influences. Satan, once a glorious spirit of light, but now the prince of darkness, is represented as seating himself on 'a lofty throne' to denote his indomitable pride and cruel tyranny. The 'vast plain' signifies the broad way which leads to destruction. 'Babylon,' the city of confusion, points to the disorder which sin has introduced into the world. The 'fire and smoke' of which his throne is composed are emblems of the agitation and darkness which surround him. And these characteristic traits are, in turn, symbolical of the effects he produces in the souls of those who follow him, inflaming their passions,

darkening and confusing their consciences, and blinding their minds.

Our Lord, on the other hand, is represented as taking His station ' near Jerusalem,' the city of peace, for He is indeed ' the Prince of Peace ' (*Isa.* ix. 6), and gives to all who fight under His standard ' the peace of God which passeth all understanding ' (*Phil.* iv. 7) ; and ' in a lowly place,' by which is expressed His great humility, who for us came down from heaven and was made man, and says to all who would follow Him, ' Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls ' (*S. Matt.* xi. 29). ' Fair ' also ' and gracious to behold,' as we may think of Him in the synagogue at Nazareth, where men ' wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth ' (*S. Luke* iv. 22), or on the Mount of the Beatitudes proclaiming the laws of His spiritual kingdom. And all this again is a picture of the inward peace and sweetness of spiritual consolation with which He is wont, from time to time, to visit the souls of those who are gathered under His standard.

II. The Snares of Satan

As ' the mortal enemy ' of God and man, he is ever seeking to draw us away from our allegiance to Christ, and thereby to compass our ruin.

He tempts us unceasingly to those sins by which he thinks he can best get possession of us. He is not ubiquitous, but he has a vast host of evil spirits whom he sends to do his bidding, ' some to one city, some to another throughout the world, omitting no provinces, places, states of life, nor any single individual.' So that there is no one, in whatever place or state of life, even the holiest and as we might think the most secure, who has not need to be continually on his guard.

The means he uses to gain his end. Sometimes violence, more often craft. He does not at first tempt us to great and manifest sins, but suggests little temptations which do not seem dangerous, but which, if yielded to, will sap our loyalty and draw us away little by little from the standard of Christ to his own.

' Snares and chains ' S. Ignatius calls these temptations—' snares ' with their tempting bait to entice us, and ' chains ' by which, after we have been ensnared, he holds us fast. How true this is ! Little temptations to things trifling or harmless in appearance, yet really full of danger ; little sins and neglects which so easily become habits binding us like chains—venial sins at first, but leading little by little to those which are mortal.

While he tempts us he promises happiness and ' a good time,' but he is ' a liar ' and ' a murderer from the beginning ' (*S. John* viii. 44), ever since he tempted Adam and Eve, saying, ' Ye shall not surely die . . . but ye shall be as gods ' (*Gen.* iii. 4, 5). So he enticed them into his net, and brought sin and misery into the world.

What millions upon millions he has deceived and taken captive since then ! Well may we wonder at the blindness and folly of men who still trust his lying promises, only to find in the end that they have been deceived to their everlasting ruin.

III. The Spirit and the Purpose of Christ

He comes into the world to conquer Satan, the great rebel, and to deliver us from bondage to him. He calls all men to come to Him ' that they may have life ' (*S. John* x. 10), even the ' true life ' which is in Himself.

His spirit is the very opposite to Satan's. There is no deceit about Him. He is the Truth, and comes to teach us the truth which alone can set us free, or preserve us from being again taken captive by our enemy.

Let us draw near and listen to the truth which He will teach us.

1. *First He tells us of the danger of riches.* ' How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! ' (*S. Mark* x. 23). Riches are not evil in themselves, but the love of them and the desire for them is full of danger. If we have them we must be detached from them. We must recognize that they are not the real good Satan would have us think them to be. If we have them not we must

be content without them, knowing that poverty is the more blessed condition. ' Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God ' (*S. Luke* vi. 20). Here is the antidote to that love of the world, which blinds our eyes to spiritual truth, and shuts out the love of the Father (1 *S. John* ii. 15). Let us pray that we may at least be poor in spirit.

2. *Next our Lord speaks of humility.* ' Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls ' (*S. Matt.* xi. 29). Here is our defence against the spirit of pride and independence which Satan especially desires to stir up in our hearts ; for he knows that pride will lead on to all other sins.

3. *Thirdly, He speaks of self-denial and the Cross.* ' If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it ' (*S. Matt.* xvi. 24, 25).

This is the substance of the ' sacred doctrine ' by means of which our Lord seeks to draw us to His standard, and keep us safe under it from the snares of the devil.

Let us meditate deeply upon this ' sacred doctrine,' and pray that we may be increasingly bound to our Lord in the love of poverty, humility, and the Cross ; and that we may know with ever deeper conviction that this is the only ' true life,' because it is the life which Christ, the eternal Truth, chose for Himself when He came into the world to do battle with the great enemy, and to call all men to rally to His standard, under which alone they can be kept safe, and be made partakers of His victory.

Imitation of Christ, III. xviii, lvi.

THREE CLASSES OF MEN

In the meditation on Two Standards, we have resolved to attach ourselves to that of Jesus Christ. To test the sincerity and solidity of this resolution S. Ignatius gives us an exercise on ' three classes of men, in order that we may choose the best.'

Prel. i. Think of three men attacked by serious illness. Each of them desires to get well. But the first will not take any remedies because of their bitterness, nor submit to an operation because of its painfulness. The second will bear some measure of treatment, provided it is not too drastic. The third gives himself up entirely to his physician or surgeon, and is ready to do everything necessary for a perfect cure.

Those who say that they wish to follow Christ and fight under His standard may be divided into three classes, corresponding to one or other of these sick persons.

Prel. ii. Think of yourself in the presence of God and all His saints, desiring to know what is most pleasing to His divine Goodness.

Prel. iii. Ask for grace to choose that which is most for the glory of His divine Majesty and for the salvation of your soul.

I. The First Class

This class consists of those who *wish*, but do not *will*.

To it belong all those who are convinced of the truths of religion—of the sovereign dominion of God over all men, of the evil of sin, of heaven and hell, and of the necessity of saving their souls. They wish, they say, to save their souls, to be converted, to live a good life, to follow Christ. But they stop there. They do not take the necessary means. They intend to do something some day ; but they are always putting off, like S. Augustine, before his conversion, who used to pray, ' O Lord, give me chastity, only not yet,' wishing to be free from his sin, yet wishing still more to indulge in it a little longer ; not really willing to make the effort to obey the call of his conscience and of grace.

Such persons are like the sick man who wishes to be cured, but will not take the necessary means.

Examine before God whether you do not belong to this class. You wish to give up sin, to follow Christ, to live a good life, to be saved. But all this requires effort on your part; for example, giving up some sin, avoidance of the occasions of it, prayer, more frequent and better use of the Sacraments, some rule of life, some sacrifice, etc. Are you ready to make this effort, and to begin at once?

If you hesitate, consider how dangerous your state is. You are resisting the Holy Spirit and abusing grace. You feel the prick of conscience, and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. You know the means you must take . . . and yet you hesitate, and delay, or refuse. You *wish* in a sort of way, but you do not *will*.

II. The Second Class

The second class comprises those who are willing to do *something*, but *not all* that is necessary.

They are ready to take some steps towards putting away what hinders their conversion and salvation, but not to take all the means in their power—not those which perhaps are most necessary and really go to the root of the matter.

These are like the sick man who will only take certain remedies, and those not the really effectual ones.

Here again, look well into yourself and see if you do not belong to this class. You have come to see in your retreat what is necessary, what God demands of you. But it seems too much, too hard. You are only willing to do a part of it, and that the easiest part, the least efficacious. You try to make some compromise with your conscience.

For most persons there is in retreat a moment of hard struggle between their lower and their higher nature, between the flesh and the spirit, between their temporal and their eternal interests. It is not surprising. Eternity seems so far away, the present life so close at hand. The world and the flesh are so insistent in their demands.

All the saints, all the saved, have had to go through this struggle. You will only find peace and salvation on the

same conditions. If the combat is hard, if it calls for resistance even unto blood, pray earnestly, perseveringly. God will help you, console you, sweeten the bitterness of the conflict. But as you value your soul, do not refuse Him what He plainly asks of you.

Consider how dangerous it would be to refuse.

1. *It would be to lose the principal fruit of the retreat*; to turn your back upon all the graces God has prepared for you, and would have given you if you had been obedient to His voice in this retreat.

2. *It would be to risk your salvation.* For God withdraws His grace from those who will not yield to His call, and then, without His grace, you will have to meet temptation in your own weakness.

3. *It would be to increase your difficulties in trying to shirk them*; for our passions, when not fought against, become stronger and more exacting.

III. The Third Class

The third class is composed of those who give themselves to God without reserve; who *will* their conversion and salvation at any cost; who are ready to take all the means that may be necessary, and refuse no sacrifice.

Such souls are like the sick man who wills his cure whatever it may cost, and gives himself up entirely into the hands of his physician, ready to submit to any and every kind of treatment. These alone can be said to will their salvation sincerely and effectually.

Meditate upon the motives which should urge you to place yourself in this third class.

1. *It will bring you happiness in this life.* Happiness is what we all long for, and are always seeking in one way or another. But you will never find true happiness except in doing the will of God.

2. *There are innumerable graces and blessings which God gives to generous souls*—peace of heart, strength in tempta-

tion, joy in sacrifice. . . . These may be yours if you are whole-hearted with God.

3. *You will gain the moral assurance of salvation*; much treasure laid up in heaven; an immense weight of glory for eternity.

Resolve, then, to have done with all insincere and half measures, and to 'count all things but loss that you may win Christ, and be found in Him' (*Phil.* iii. 8).

At the end of this meditation S. Ignatius adds an important note, to the effect that when we feel a great shrinking from that which God and our conscience demand, we should pray earnestly and again and again, even though our lower nature shrinks and fears lest the prayer should be granted, that God would give us grace to make the sacrifice He asks of us, and should also protest before Him that we are ready to make it, if it be His will. It was thus that our Lord prayed in Gethsemane, 'Not what I will, but what Thou wilt' (*S. Mark* xiv. 36).

Imitation of Christ, I. xi; III. xxvii.

THE RELICS OF THE PASSION

In a missionary college at Paris there is a hall in which are kept the relics of those educated at the college and since martyred in the mission field. There you may see the instruments of torture by which some of them suffered, or articles saved from their personal possessions : the blood-stained cassock of one, the prayer book of another, the crucifix of a third, etc.

Each morning before commencing study the students visit this hall to ask, in a brief prayer, for grace and courage to follow in the steps of those who have gone before them, and to suffer, if need be, as they did in the cause of Christ.

Prel. i. Imagine yourself conducted by an angel round one of the courts of heaven where are stored the relics of the Passion of Jesus, the King of martyrs.

Prel. ii. Contemplate those relics, and pray that you may have grace to lay to heart the lessons they will teach you.

I

The angel shows you :—

1. *Some silver coins.* They are the thirty pieces for which Judas sold his Master. Contemplate them, and see in them a warning against the sin of avarice ; and pray our Lord to root out of your heart all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches. Learn to be content with little, to seek only what is necessary, to be at least poor in spirit. What shall it profit me, if I gain the whole world and lose my soul? (*S. Mark* viii. 36). 'The love of money,' says the Apostle, 'is the root of all evil' (1 *Tim.* vi. 10).

2. *A piece of cord stained with blood.* It is the cord with which Jesus was bound by the officers of the Jews in the garden. They bound Him, who gave Himself so willingly into their power ! O my Lord, it was for me that Thou wast bound ; because I am so self-willed and abuse my liberty in so many ways, seeking only my own pleasure and the indulgence of my passions. O my Saviour, deliver me from this false liberty which I only use to sin against Thee. By Thy bonds I beseech Thee to release me from

those chains of sin which keep me apart from Thee, and to bind me to Thyself in the sweet bonds of love for evermore.

3. *A piece of cloth*, rough and of coarse material, yet how precious ! for it is that with which Jesus was blind-folded. They covered Thy sacred face, O Lord, lest Thine eyes should soften their hearts and restrain their cruelty. O hide not Thou Thy face from me when I am so wretched as to sin against Thee, but look on me as Thou didst look on Peter, that, like him, I may be won back to penitence and love.

4. *A basin of water*. It is that in which Pilate washed his hands, proclaiming himself innocent of the crime he was committing. O wondrous self-deceit ! Yet, how often have I too tried to cheat my conscience, shifting responsibility from myself and laying the blame of my sin upon others ; or making my confession with my lips, but not forsaking sin in my heart ; or again, joining in sin because I had not courage to stand out against others.

5. *A crown of thorns*. It is the crown which Jesus wore as thy King. Why did He wear such a crown as that ? Ask Him, and He will tell thee. ' I wore it, My son, for thee ; because thou art so proud in thine own conceit, so confident in thy own powers, thine own cleverness and strength of reason. Thy pride and vanity, thy foolish thoughts and vain imaginations, thy love of flattery and pre-eminence—these were the thorns that pierced My head.'

As you contemplate this crown, pray Him who wore it for you, to give you of His own humility ; to take from you all pride and self-confidence, all vain and sinful thoughts. Pray Him to rule over you as your rightful King, and dedicate anew to Him all the thoughts and powers of your mind.

6. *A scourge*, of leather thongs, knotted with pieces of bone and iron. Think of the sharp pain of that terrible scourging. Listen to the blows as they fall so heavily upon Him. ' The plowers plowed upon My back, and made long furrows ' (*Ps.* cxxix. 3). O my Lord, why is this ? My conscience will make answer : it is because I am so soft, so

luxurious, so fastidious and self-indulgent ; because I have so often sinned with my body.

O Lord, give me grace and courage to mortify my flesh.

7. *Some heavy nails* with blunt points and large heads. They are the nails which pierced the hands and feet of Jesus. O Lord, it is I who drove in those nails by my wilful sins. But now nail Thou my sinful nature to Thy Cross, till it be dead to sin. Grant me grace never to crucify Thee again by any deadly sin.

8. *The garments worn by our Lord*—all of earthly possessions that He had, and even of these He was stripped bare. O wondrous poverty of my Lord ! Shall I not, then, be ashamed of spending so much upon myself, of thinking so much of earthly possessions, houses, furniture, dress, all that ministers to luxury and pride, while Thou art still homeless and hungry and naked in Thy poor.

9. *Some dice*—those with which the soldiers beguiled the tedious hours while they watched by the Cross. What am I to learn from these ? A picture of the frivolity with which I have trifled away so much of my life, even under the shadow of the Cross. O days and years that I have wasted, playing with trifles ! Days when I have only cared to amuse myself and pass away the time ! Days without prayer, without one serious thought of the solemn issues of life and death ! Lord, grant that by Thy grace I may yet redeem the time, and have some true work for Thee to show when Thou shalt call me to give an account of all that I have done, or left undone.

II

As I continue to kneel and meditate, I will gather these further fruits.

1. *Fear and hatred of sin* ; for now I see what sin really is. In contemplating these relics of the Passion I see, as in a picture, the manifold effects of sin and the full extent to which it will go, if left unchecked.

2. *Perfect contrition.* This is the same fruit I sought to gain from my meditations on sin. But the motives which

move me to sorrow here are different. There they were chiefly the foulness and malice of sin in itself, and the punishments due to it. Here the chief motive is 'compassion because for my sins our Lord goes to His Passion.' This is a nobler motive, and will work in me a deeper and more unselfish sorrow.

3. *Love for Him who has so loved me.* For surely I cannot contemplate the Passion and not make some response of love! 'What is it, O Lord, that Thou art asking of me? O Love, I give myself to Thee. Thou didst give all for me: I will give all for Thee. Every wish, let it be given up if not according to Thy will. Everything that separates me from Thee, let it be put away. This only will content me, that I may be wholly Thine; that Thou mayest from henceforth be my King, and that I may follow Thee faithfully to the end.'

Imitation of Christ, II. xi, xii.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

PREL. i. Place yourself in spirit before some altar where you are accustomed to hear Mass and to communicate.

Prel. ii. Pray for an increase of faith in this holy mystery, and of reverence and devotion in your use of it.

I. THE REAL PRESENCE

Our Lord took bread and wine into His hands, and blessed them and said, ' This is My Body, This is My Blood.' He spake and it was done. The words of God are words of power : they effect that which they declare. As at the creation He said, ' Let there be light, and light was,' so now He took bread and said, ' This is My Body,' and by His word He made it to become His Body.

What He did then in His own person He does still through His priests. The priest at the altar speaks and acts in the person of Christ. His words are words of power because they are still the words of Christ. As they are spoken, again the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. And where His Body and Blood are there is Christ Himself, body, soul, and divinity ; for He cannot be divided. Oh, marvellous mystery of the altar ! It is like the mystery of the Incarnation. Mary said, ' Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word,' and immediately the Son of God came down, and took upon Him our nature of the substance of the Virgin Mary His mother. ' The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' Mary spoke those few words of self-surrender, and the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished. So now in the Holy Eucharist, the priest bending over the altar pronounces a few words in a quiet voice, and our Lord is with us, veiling His presence under the forms of bread and wine.

But though hidden from our outward eyes He is really there, and as we worship Him, He sees us and reads our hearts, and delights to have us come and offer ourselves to Him, and make our prayers, telling Him of all our wants and troubles, our hopes and fears, our longings and desires, all that is in our hearts. And as we kneel in prayer the

Holy Ghost, who proceeds from Him, will melt our cold hearts and increase our faith and love.

My God, I believe ; help Thou my unbelief ; increase my faith. Thy presence is a reality. It does not exist merely in my imagination or thought. It is not brought about by my faith, or in the act of my reception. I believe that after the consecration, and independent altogether of my faith or my reception, Thy Body and Blood are there ; and where Thy Body and Blood are, there Thou art Thyself in all the completeness of Thy personal presence, my Lord, and my God. If my eyes were opened I should see what angels around the altar see and worship.

II. The Bread of Life

Man was formed to live with the life of God. By the Fall he forfeited this life. By no effort of his own can he regain it. So the Son of God became incarnate in order to restore it.

By the power of the Holy Ghost He took our dead nature of the substance of the Virgin Mary, His mother, and as He took it He quickened it with His own divine life. By His death and resurrection He obtained power to give this life to those whom He should take into union with His own glorified body. Therefore, speaking of Himself, He said, 'I am the living Bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever : and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . . Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath [not *shall have*, but *hath already*] eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day' (*S. John* vi. 51, 54).

Meditate upon these wonderful words. In them our Lord sums up the truth of His gift of Himself in the Blessed Sacrament.

1. He came down from heaven. He is the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father.

2. He came down to be the Food of man.

3. He is living and life-giving Food. He does not sustain the mere natural life of those whom He feeds, but He communicates to man that eternal life with which He Himself lives.

4. The Bread that He gives is His Flesh—not now in the weakness of mortality—for in that condition it could not give us life—but His Flesh glorified and life-giving by the power of the Holy Ghost.

5. He gives His Flesh 'for the life of the world,' first as a redeeming sacrifice, and then in a sacrament to communicate His renewing life.

6. By feeding upon Him our bodies also are united with His most pure and holy body, and prepared for a glorious resurrection at the last day.

Thus the new life given to us in Baptism is preserved, nourished, and perfected by this heavenly Food, the Bread of Life.

III. The Fruits of Communion

Abiding in Christ by sacramental grace we share in what He has done for us.

1. We share in the merits of His atoning death. 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (*Rom.* viii. 1). We are forgiven not only because Christ died for us, but because God sees us in Christ, and looks upon us as being already what we shall fully become, if we abide in Him to the end.

2. We share in all the fullness of grace that He has won for us. By a life of obedience and discipline He sanctified His human nature to be the storehouse and source of every grace that we can need.

Think of this in relation to the Beatitudes (*S. Matt.* v. 3–12), those holy tempers and graces which our Lord so greatly desires to see in you. Pray Him by the gift of Himself to you in your Communions :—

(*a*) To make you poor in spirit, that you may be—
Detached from earthly things, ready to give up anything He may ask of you.
Humble as a poor man before others.
Utterly abased before God.

(*b*) To make you mourn—
For sin in yourself, and in others. With the true sorrow of contrition, not 'the sorrow of the world which worketh death' (*2 Cor.* vii. 10),

That you may have the true comfort of the Holy Spirit.

(*c*) To make you meek and lowly in heart, that you may—
Check all feelings of anger,
Speak gently,
Bear injuries with patience.

(*d*) To make you hunger and thirst after righteousness, that you may—
Be filled with grace in Holy Communion,
Long to grow in holiness,
Desire that the whole world may have this righteousness.

(*e*) To make you merciful in—
Succouring the poor, the homeless, the sick,
Instructing the ignorant,
Converting sinners,
Forgiving injuries,
Praying for the living and the dead.

(*f*) To make you pure in heart, that you may—
Put away all sinful thoughts,
Adorn your heart with holy thoughts and desires.

(*g*) That you may be a peace-maker—
Quieting your own soul,
Seeking peace with all men,
Making peace between neighbours,
Reconciling the souls of others to God.

(*h*) To enable you to bear persecution for righteousness sake, whether it be—
In goods, or reputation,
By slander and evil words,
At home, or at your work.

Recall such thoughts, and pray such prayers, as you prepare for Communion or make your thanksgiving after it. Think how our Lord longs to give Himself and impart these graces to you. Think not only of your soul's need, but of His joy in giving. Think too of the sensitiveness of His love so often wounded by your coldness and indifference, and pray that you may always come to your Communions with the fervent desire to be filled with His grace, and to give yourself wholly to Him, who gives Himself so unreservedly to you.

Collect, Corpus Christi.

Imitation of Christ, IV. xiii–xvi.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

THE purpose of this meditation is to strengthen and confirm the resolution we have made to give ourselves to God without reserve, and to employ all the means necessary for our perseverance.

Prel. i. Contemplate the empty sepulchre from which our Lord, leaving behind the grave-clothes, has come forth in the glory of His risen body.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace to rejoice with Christ in His glory, and to rise with Him in newness of life.

I. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION

It is proportionate to the humiliations and the sufferings of His earthly life, and especially of His Passion.

1. *In His Passion our Lord made the sacrifice of His body.* He gave His body to be scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to the Cross; He was 'wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, oppressed and afflicted, stricken for the transgression of His people, cut off from the land of the living' (*Isa.* liii. 2–8).

Now He rises from the dead, with a new and immortal life, elevated above nature, clothed with a spiritual body free from all the limitations of space and matter.

To me too the same glory is promised. If I have shared along with my Leader and Captain the toils and sufferings of His warfare, I shall share also in His glory. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne' (*Rev.* iii. 21; see also *Phil.* iii. 21; *Col.* iii. 4).

2. *In His Passion our Lord made the sacrifice of His honour.* He was 'despised and rejected of men' (*Isa.* liii. 3), 'a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people' (*Ps.* xxii. 6), accounted as a common criminal, and crucified between two robbers.

Now that He is risen from the dead all is reversed. Jerusalem is filled with the fame of His triumph. The chief priests and judges of the people are confounded. The

soldiers bear witness. The Apostles, who had forsaken Him and fled, now preach boldly in His Name. Angels and the souls of just men set free from captivity proclaim His victory.

So shall it one day be with me, in proportion to the humiliations and contempt I have suffered for His Name's sake. ' If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. . . . Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator ' (1 *S. Pet.* iv. 14, 19).

3. *In His Passion our Lord made the sacrifice of the consolations of His soul.* He drank the cup of sorrow and bitterness to the dregs. ' My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ' (*S. Matt.* xxvi. 38). So great was His desolation that He cried upon the Cross, ' My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ' (ibid. xxvii. 46).

Now the time of sorrow is passed. In proportion to the greatness of His sufferings, consolations fill His soul. He drinks of the river of heavenly joys in the fruition of eternal glory.

So shall it be with me also, if I am true to Christ. ' The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us ' (*Rom.* viii. 18). ' For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal ' (2 *Cor.* iv. 17, 18).

II. Our Lord's Resurrection the Source and Model of our New Life

At His Resurrection our Lord's body passed into a new and glorified condition. It was no longer a natural body, hampered by the limitations of space and matter. It had become what S. Paul calls a ' spiritual body,' a body ruled and living by the Spirit, so as to be the fit instrument for the perfect expression of divine life and power.

S. Paul tells us that if we are truly Christ's there must be in us a new life, a spiritual resurrection, corresponding to,

and indeed the outcome of, Christ's Resurrection. 'Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life' (*Rom.* vi. 4). The two things go together. If we are to walk in newness of life, it can only be by the power of Christ's risen life working in us.

What is the ground of this comparison? What is the connection between Christ's Resurrection and our walking in newness of life?

The answer is that the source, the motive power, of the two things, of Christ's Resurrection and of our new life, is one and the same. Both are effects of one and the same divine power. By His Resurrection Christ became 'a quickening' or life-giving spirit (1 *Cor.* xv. 45), able to communicate His own risen life to us, so as to form in us the likeness of Himself.

Consider some points of likeness between the Resurrection of our Lord and that newness of life in which we ought to live, as the fruit of our retreat.

1. *Our Lord's Resurrection was real.* It was the Resurrection of One who had really died. And having really died and been buried, He really rose from the dead, and came forth from the tomb leaving the grave-clothes behind, and showed Himself alive to those who had known Him both in Jerusalem and in Galilee. His Resurrection was no phantom, no make-believe, but a great and glorious reality.

So it must be with my soul. As I come forth from my retreat it must be as one risen from the dead, from the death of sin to newness of spiritual life. It is of no use to be risen merely in appearance, if in fact I am still lying in the sepulchre of sin, still wrapped in the grave-clothes of evil habits. Shadowy phantoms of a renewed life will not avail. The mere semblance of a new life without real conversion of heart and amendment of life is useless. This is the first lesson our Lord's Resurrection teaches, the need of reality in Christian life and profession.

2. *Our Lord's risen life lasts.* 'Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him' (*Rom.* vi. 9).

It should be the same with my new life in Christ. It

should be a moral and spiritual resurrection that lasts. I shall indeed still be subject to temptation and sin—some sins of infirmity I cannot hope to escape altogether; but my new life, my life after my retreat, should be like the risen life of Christ in this, that it is at least free from relapses into wilful sin.

This is possible, with the grace of God. Yet if I should at any time be overcome by the old temptation, and should again sin grievously, I will never despair. I will repent and rise again, and seek absolution. And for lesser sins there is daily cleansing. 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin' (1 *S. John* i. 7).

3. *Our Lord's risen life was manifest to others.* 'The Lord is risen indeed [ὄντως, in reality], and hath appeared to Simon' (*S. Luke* xxiv. 34); and not only to Simon, but to many others in Jerusalem and in Galilee.

So must my spiritual resurrection, my new life, be manifest to others; especially to those to whom I may have given scandal or been disedifying. I must not be kept back by any fear of letting others see that I am changed, that my retreat has had a real effect upon me, and that I have come forth from it to live a new life to the glory of God.

Collect, Easter Day.

Imitation of Christ, III. xlvii, xlix.

RETREAT II

Retreat II. Meditation I.

GOD'S CALL TO RETREAT

'I WILL allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her' (*Hos.* ii. 14).

I

1. *God has put it into my heart to make this retreat.* Whatever may have led me to make up my mind to come, reasons perhaps of various kinds, yet behind all these has been the guidance of God, and the drawing of His grace. I ought, therefore, to correspond with this purpose and grace of God, by trying to enter into the retreat with all my heart, to give my whole mind and undivided attention to it, to be exact in following out each one of its exercises, that I may gain all the fruit from it which God intends that I should gain. Let me not miss the blessing which God has to give me, by any carelessness, or inattention, or spiritual or bodily sloth.

2. *The opportunity of a retreat is a grace not given to all.* Thousands all around are living without God in the world, or at least are living lukewarm, half-hearted lives, Christians scarcely more than in name, and have not the opportunity of a retreat, or the will to make use of it, if they have. To me God has given the opportunity and the call. Let me not receive this grace in vain. I cannot go out of retreat just as I came into it. I must be the worse for it, the more hardened and blinded, if I am not the better. O my God, make me real, make me earnest. Help me to put away all other thoughts and cares, and to seek Thee with all my heart. Then I know that I shall find Thee, and be found of

Thee. It is Thine own promise : ' If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul ' (*Deut.* iv. 29).

3. *The retreat which I am now beginning may be the last I shall have an opportunity of making.* If I were certain of this, with what care and fervour I should make it ! If my former retreats have been made without fervour and with little fruit of amendment, I will try now to repair whatever has been defective, and to set my soul right with God by a really good retreat.

II

1. God, in His desire to bless and sanctify me, calls me to *interior* solitude and silence even more than to *exterior*. Therefore I must put away from my mind and heart whatever would hinder the concentration of all my powers on the work of the retreat. I must try to spend these days as though there were not in the world another being besides myself and God. These few days belong so entirely to God, that during them I have no business to think of any trivialities. I must take care not to bring into the retreat a dissipated mind. God wishes me to be alone with Him, as it were in the wilderness, that He may speak to my heart, and that I may be able to hear what He will say to me.

2. I must yield myself to the presence and power of His holiness, His life, His love. Christ on earth needed this. He could not live the life of a Son here in the flesh, without often going apart and being alone with His Father. How much more must this be necessary for me !

3. Alone with God—that is the secret of true power in prayer ; of real fellowship with God ; of power for service. There is no true, deep conversion, no true holiness, no being filled with the Spirit and with power, without being often alone with God. That is the purpose of my daily meditation, or of such frequent meditation as I am able to make, according to my rule and opportunities. And it is also the purpose of my retreat. God calls me apart that He may speak to my heart, that He may make Himself

more fully known to me, that He may show me what He wants me to be and to do. Therefore, I will listen in stillness. I will say to Him, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. Show Thou me what Thou wouldest have me to do, for I lift up my soul unto Thee.'

III

1. The purpose of my retreat is not just to spend more time than usual in meditation and prayer. These are indeed essential accompaniments of a good retreat, but they are not everything. They are for the sake of something else. They are to help me to discover the real dispositions of my heart; to see clearly my faults, and imperfections, and evil habits; to examine how I perform my daily duties, both spiritual and temporal; to amend my life; to renew my good purposes; to seek to know God's will concerning me, and to give myself to Him to be and to do all that He wills that I should be and do.

2. If my retreat does not lead to this, then, whatever warm feelings and good desires I may have at the time, the retreat will not have done for me what God intends that it should do. The warm feelings will die away. The good desires will bring forth no fruit. What is needed, if the retreat is to bear fruit, is that I should aim at something specific and determinate. I must examine in what particular duties to God, to my neighbour, and to myself, I am failing and falling short. I must ask God to show me what are the particular resolutions He would have me make; and having made them, I must pray much for grace to keep them.

3. Thus it is that the retreat will be made practical and definite. It is not to end with itself. It is to bear fruit in my daily life when the retreat is over. It is to set me forward on the way to God, and then to keep me in it, so that when I come to my next retreat it may not be merely to make up lost ground, or repair the ruins of a life that has fallen to pieces; but may be a vantage ground from which I may make further progress to higher things.

I will take, then, these thoughts for my meditation to-night :—

1. *God has called me into this retreat because He has something to say to me*—some help and blessing to give me.

2. *In order that I may be able to hear His voice, I must prepare my soul to listen.* I must try to put away all thoughts that do not belong to the retreat, and to be alone with God.

3. *I must be definite and practical.* I must look into my life and see where I have failed and gone wrong. I must ask God to show me what He would have me do now, and to give me grace and courage to do it. And the results of this I must embody in some definite resolution, which will fix and preserve the solid fruit of the retreat.

Imitation of Christ, I. xx ; III. liii.

THE WORK OF MY SALVATION

PREL. i. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For [a reason for encouragement] it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure' (*Phil.* ii. 12, 13). 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure' (2 *S. Pet.* i. 10).

Prel. ii. Pray for earnestness, courage, perseverance in this work.

I. MY SALVATION IS A PERSONAL WORK

No one else can do it for me. Not even God Himself without my own will and effort. I, with the help of His grace, must work out my own salvation. I must make my calling and election sure.

God *has called me and placed me in a state of salvation*, i.e. a state in which I shall be finally and completely saved *if I continue in it to my life's end.*

The conditions of continuing in it are: (1) to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; (2) to believe the Catholic Faith; (3) to keep God's holy will and commandments unto my life's end. All these are personal acts.

Have I really accepted these conditions? Has there been this personal response to the grace of my baptism? *Am I giving diligence to make my calling and election sure?*

Whatever may be my difficulties and temptations, I can do this. For I am not left to myself. 'It is God that worketh in' me 'both to will and to do of His good pleasure.' And His will is my sanctification and salvation (1 *Thess.* iv. 3; 1 *Tim.* ii. 4).

II. A WORK DEMANDING CARE AND EFFORT

1. When asked, 'Are there few that be saved?' our Lord did not answer directly, but said, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able' (*S. Luke* xiii. 24). And again, 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and

narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it' (*S. Matt.* vii. 13, 14).

2. Our Lord did not say this to make me hopeless, as if the difficulties were too great. But He did mean me to think seriously of this work of my salvation: not to take it for granted that I must be all right because my life is outwardly correct, according to the standard of the majority of those around me. What if they and I should alike be in the broad way that leads to destruction? Many, our Lord says, walk in that way. I must test myself not by comparing my life with that of so many round about me, but by the teaching of our Lord. He bids me 'strive.' It is a strong word, agonize (ἀγωνίζεσθε), put forth all your effort, as in the public games. He speaks of 'the strait gate' of repentance and self-denial, and 'the narrow way' of discipline and the Cross.

3. Or think of our Lord's teaching in the Beatitudes (*S. Matt.* v. 3–12). Are there at least the beginnings of these holy tempers in me? Or what He says about the spiritual meaning of the Commandments; or about prayer, fasting, almsgiving; or about seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; or the impossibility of serving two masters (ibid. v. 27–vi. 34). Are we not all in danger of taking the world's glosses upon our Lord's teaching, and of thinking we are living the Christian life and are all right, because we live according to the world's standard? What else is this but to be in the broad way against which our Lord warns us?

Let me ask myself in the presence of God, Have I reason to hope that I have entered by the strait gate and am walking in the narrow way? Is my religion real? Am I trying to follow Christ, and to be made like Him? Is there anything that looks like effort, striving, conflict, in my life?

III. A Work Most Necessary and Most Urgent

1. *Most necessary.* I can do without everything else, but not without God. I could not bear to think of being parted

from God for ever. I can resign myself to every other ill, but not to be lost. And, if I am not saved, I shall be lost. There is no alternative : saved or lost for ever. And a few years at longest will decide which it is to be for me.

2. *Most urgent.* It admits of no delay. My whole life is not too long for it. If I have wasted part of it, the necessity of beginning now is only the more urgent How much there is to be done ! So much evil to repair, so many faults to be corrected, so many virtues to be acquired, so many lost days and years to make up for ! And what time can I count upon ? Another year ? Another month ? Oh, if God shows me now in this retreat anything He would have me do in order to begin in earnest the work of my salvation, or to make it more secure, shall I not obey His call ? Now, while there is yet time. Now, while God offers me His grace.

3. *A work that can be done only once.* I have but one life to live, one soul to save. If I idle away the time now, I can never recover it. And life slips away so quickly. So soon it will be over—my one short life ; and will the work be done ? Shall I have worked out my salvation ? Shall I have made my calling and election sure ? Oh, the misery and despair if I have not ! I could have been saved once, but I did not set about the work, or I did not persevere. And now the time for work is over ; the day of salvation has gone down for me in the darkness of death ; my one life wasted, my one soul lost.

So let me meditate upon the work of my salvation : (1) a personal work which I must do for myself ; a work requiring real care and effort ; (2) a work of all others the most necessary, and the most urgent ; (3) a work which I can do, or fail in doing, only once.

And let me ask, Have I really set my hand to this work ? Do I look upon it as the most important of all works ? Is there anything which is hindering it ? Anything which my conscience tells me I must part with, if I would not part with God ?

O my God, make me to be in earnest. Help me to put

away all trifling and self-deception, all cowardice and half-heartedness. One thing is necessary—that I should give myself to Thee, love Thee, serve Thee here, and enjoy Thee hereafter for ever. I know that this is the sole end for which I was created; that this alone can satisfy the deepest, most enduring, needs of my nature.

Imitation of Christ, III. xlvii.

THE BEGINNING OF SIN

READ Genesis iii. 1–8. Though the details of this narrative are probably to be interpreted allegorically rather than literally, yet they are in marvellous agreement with the facts of experience. Adam is the head and representative of the human race. The story of his temptation and fall has a universal significance, and shows each man, as in a mirror, his own experience.

Prel. i. Think of the first serious sin of childhood.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace to resist the beginnings of sin. 'Turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way' (*Ps.* cxix. 37).

I. THE BEGINNING OF SIN

1. *Evil curiosity*, the desire for forbidden knowledge. 'A tree to make one wise' (*Gen.* iii. 6). The serpent was quite right about the eating enabling Eve to 'know good and evil.' Before she ate she knew only what was good. The eating gave her fresh knowledge, but a knowledge she had far better have been without—the knowledge of evil.

2. *Sensuality*. Eve saw that 'the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes.' Here we have the appeal to 'the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes'—the desire to touch and taste. So Satan appeals to the love of beauty, the pleasures of the senses. Thus he inflames the passions, and breaks down the resistance of the will. 'Our great security against sin consists in our being shocked at it. Eve gazed and reflected, when she should have fled.'

3. *Unbelief*. Eve knew God's command. She remembered His warning. But she listened to another voice, tempting her to doubt God's word. 'Ye shall not surely die' (*Gen.* iii. 4). She parleyed with the serpent, when she should have turned away at once.

II. THE CHARACTER OF SIN

1. *It is rebellion against God*. As our Creator, God has a right to give us laws, a right to put a prohibition on any

tree of the garden. There is nothing harsh or arbitrary in this. God has established all His laws, and given all His commandments, for our real good and happiness.

2. *It is ingratitude.* God has surrounded us with so many good things, given us so many pleasures that are innocent and healthful. But we are ungrateful, discontented; we think God deals hardly with us, because some pleasures are forbidden us. Or, like the prodigal son, we are not content to enjoy along with God the good things He provides for us in our true home, but are impatient to take what portion of goods we can get for ourselves, and go our own way in selfishness and pride.

3. *It is idolatry:* a 'worshipping and serving of the creature more than the Creator' (*Rom.* i. 25). It may be a small thing in itself that we choose in place of God, but it is none the less an idol if it has the first place in our hearts.

4. *It is a deception*, a mistake, a missing of the true end and purpose of our life (ἁμαρτία). The Bible speaks of 'the deceitfulness of sin' (*Heb.* iii. 13, cf. *Rom.* vii. 11; 2 *Cor.* xi. 3). How true this is. Sin often looks so attractive; it turns out to be so deadly. It promises pleasure; 'at the last it biteth like a serpent' (*Prov.* xxiii. 32).

III. The Results of Sin

1. *The loss of God.* The indwelling presence of God is the life of the soul. By their sin Adam and Eve lost the presence of God, and became 'dead in sin.' So with us. When we are in the state of grace, God dwells in our souls. By sin, at least by mortal sin, we forfeit grace and lose the presence of God, which is the life of the soul.

2. *Blindness.* Though our eyes are opened to a new knowledge of evil, yet they are strangely blinded to its real character. Our moral judgement is perverted; our conscience is dulled and weakened. We continue to sin, and do not feel how terrible an evil it is.

3. *Bondage.* 'Every one that committeth sin is the slave of sin' (*S. John* viii. 34; *Rom.* vi. 16–19). We see how fearfully true this is of some sins, e.g. drink and lust. It is

the same with many other sins more subtle and less noticeable. By repetition, habits are formed which bind us as with chains. This is the history of every besetting sin.

4. *Shame and fear.* 'They knew that they were naked' and when 'they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden,' they were 'afraid and hid themselves' (*Gen.* iii. 7, 8). When we have sinned, we are afraid of God. We know that we are 'naked,' stripped of innocence and sanctifying grace. We want to hide away from God. But where shall we find a hiding-place? 'Thou art about my path and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways. . . . If I climb up to heaven Thou art there; if I go down to hell Thou art there also. . . . If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day; the darkness and light to Thee are both alike' (*Ps.* cxxxix. 2, 7, 10, 11).

IV. Personal Application

Take your own case, your own besetting sin. See how it began, how it has developed in your life. Trace its consequences, the loss of happiness in God, the slavery of habit, the fear of death.

And now God comes to you in your retreat, as He came to Adam, and says, 'Where art thou?' (*Gen.* iii. 9). He calls you out of your hiding-place to face the truth about yourself, to come back to Him in penitent confession, that you may be pardoned, set free, restored.

Think of the joy of absolution if you are really penitent, and say Psalm xxxii.

Imitation of Christ, I. xiii, xxi.

MY OWN SINS

PREL. i. Think of an innocent child, and then of that same person later in life a wrecked and ruined man.

Prel. ii. Pray for a true knowledge of yourself in all the misery and shame of your sin, that so you may be truly penitent.

I. THE BEAUTY OF A SOUL IN GRACE

1. Think of an infant just baptized—the spotless purity of its soul—the indwelling presence of Christ and of the Holy Ghost—the possibilities of sanctity and glory.

2. Such was your soul once. Contrast its present state. Think of the first mortal sin you can remember. Then, perhaps, followed years of sin; resulting in defilement of soul and body, rebellion of evil passions, slavery of evil habits, haunting memories of evil, defiling thoughts and imaginations, coldness and deadness of heart, distaste for prayer and spiritual things, alienation from God.

3. If you had died as an infant in the freshness of baptismal grace, you would have been with God for ever, and never have known the misery and shame of sin.

4. What if you should die as you are now? Would death find you a penitent and in grace? To die in grace is to be saved; to die out of grace is to be lost.

5. Even if, through the mercy of God, you have repented and are in grace, still how many stains of sin have yet to be cleansed away, how much grace has been wasted while you lived in sin, how many degrees of glory that might have been yours have been forfeited!

II. THE DEADLINESS OF SIN

1. *Mortal sin is the death of the soul.* The grace of God is the life of the soul, and mortal sin separates the soul from God. Just as the body when separated from the soul is dead, so the soul when separated from God is dead.

2. *Mortal sin destroys the beauty of the soul.* Lucifer was the most glorious among the angels. By sin he has become the most horrible among devils. Adam's soul was radiant with the grace of God; by one sin he forfeited grace, and all the beauty and life of his soul departed. So when we commit a mortal sin grace is extinguished, and our soul becomes like a corrupting corpse.

3. *Mortal sin forfeits all the treasure that the soul has laid up in heaven.* If a tree is dead its fruit is dead also. So by mortal sin all our good works become dead, and we forfeit all the reward God would have given. True, if the soul is restored to grace by penitence and absolution all these dead fruits will revive, for the tree, i.e. the soul, will be once more alive.

4. *Mortal sin destroys the soul's power of doing anything worthy of eternal reward.* All the actions of man in a state of mortal sin are dead; they have no merit or power to please God, for they have nothing in them of the grace of Christ.

5. *Mortal sin cuts the soul off from the communion of saints.* As the leper was separated from the camp of Israel (*Lev.* xiii. 46), so the soul in mortal sin is an outcast from the fellowship of the saints and the household of God.

6. *Mortal sin leaves the soul in constant danger of falling into hell.* A sudden illness, an accident, a failure of the heart might cut life short quite unexpectedly, and the soul that dies in unrepented mortal sin is lost for ever.

7. *Even venial sins*, those lesser sins which do not kill the soul at one stroke, *have the beginnings of death in them.* They are the sickness of the soul. As little ailments weaken the body and make it susceptible of graver diseases, so little sins, if unchecked, dispose the soul for sins which are mortal. 'He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little' (*Ecclus.* xix. 1). It is easy to pass the shifting line which separates between venial and mortal sin, especially when conscience is dulled by habit.

III. My Own Sins

1. If I have committed but one mortal sin I have deserved hell. It is of God's mercy that I am not already lost. What, then, ought I to think of my many sins, grave sins so often repeated that they have become habits which have enslaved me for years; sins for which I have had, and perhaps still have, so little contrition; sins against light and grace and repeated warnings of conscience; sins which have defiled my body and my soul; sins committed by one who has been made a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit? (1 *Cor.* iii. 16, 17; vi. 15).

2. Let me measure the greatness of my sins by thinking of the greatness of God against whom I have sinned.

(*a*) *His love.* He created me out of love, that I might share His life, His love, His joy. This love I have spurned whenever I have sinned wilfully and knowingly.

(*b*) *His holiness.* By sin I have dishonoured His image in which I was created, and degraded myself below the level of the brute beasts, for they obey the instincts which God has given them; but I sin against the law of my nature, created in His image.

(*c*) *His power.* Every moment He upholds me in being, even while I sin against Him with the very faculties of body and soul which are His gift to me.

(*d*) *His omniscience.* I am never hid from His sight. He knows me within and without, and reads the most secret thoughts of my heart.

(*e*) *His omnipresence.* If men were present to witness my sin, their presence would restrain me. Yet, though I know that God is everywhere present, the thought of His presence does not stop me.

(*f*) *His patience.* If God left no interval between my sin and its punishment, should I dare to commit the sin? But because He is patient, I abuse His long-suffering.

3. This, then, is the God against whom I dare to sin! And for what? For some paltry, worthless object; the gratification of some vile passion of which I am ashamed;

a pleasure which passes in a moment, leaving only guilt and remorse behind.

(*a*) *What folly!* In sinning I have forsaken God, my Father, my Saviour, my chief and only good. And what in return have I found, but shame, remorse, the fear of hell!

(*b*) *And worse still, what ingratitude!* I owe everything to God, all that I am and have, all the good things with which He has surrounded me; and instead of thanking Him for these gifts and using them to His glory, I have misused them, and sinned by means of them, times out of number.

Lord, grant me to know and hate my sins. Give me true and deep repentance for them, and grace never again to offend Thee by any mortal sin.

Imitation of Christ, III. xiv, lii.

DEATH

DEATH when it comes will dispel many illusions. To meditate upon death may help me to see my life more truly now. Which way is it tending? What will it all look like on my death-bed? How shall I then wish that I had lived? Let me try to bring the thought of death home to myself now.

Prel. i. Picture your own death-bed.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace to begin to live now as you would wish to have lived when you come to die.

I. THE SEPARATION OF DEATH

1. *Death will separate me from all earthly things.* 'We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out' (1 *Tim.* vi. 7). Death will break all the ties that attach me to earthly things. Relations, friends, property, honours, pleasures, interests, plans, studies, work —all will have to be left behind.

2. *Death will separate me from my works,* except so far as their results abide within me for good or evil. At the moment of death I shall pass into the presence of God and see my life, and all that I have done in it, as He sees it. What a revelation it will be! How many things I thought good will then be seen to be no better than 'wood, hay, stubble,' to be burnt up in the fire of the judgement, even though, by God's mercy, I may myself be saved (1 *Cor.* iii. 12–15). Oh, the losses of those who, though themselves saved from destruction, see their works perish in the fire! To see in the light of God's presence that little or nothing has been done for love of Him; that so much of what I have spent my life in doing is worthless for eternity, and must perish in the fire! Yes, death will reveal what my works have really been.

3. *Death will separate me from that which is a part of myself—my body.* This body which has seemed so necessary and inseparable a part of myself; which has been the cause and instrument of so many of my sins, through lust, and sloth, and self-indulgence; which has so often hindered

me from obeying the call of God to rise to a better life; which, perhaps, has been the master of my life and made my soul its slave—this body must now be left behind to be buried in the earth and there to moulder into dust.

4. *Death will be the passage into another life*, into an endless and unchangeable state of happiness or of misery. So long as we are in this world, our eternal lot is not yet fixed. The sinner may be converted, the saint may fall. After death there is no more possibility of change from one state to another. Death will show whether the soul is lost or saved for ever.

Let me meditate on these truths, and learn from them, (1) detachment from the world, (2) the need of discipline of the body, (3) seriousness in view of the eternal issues of this present life.

II. The Certainty and Uncertainty of Death

1. *Its certainty.* It is not easy to realize this. Death always seems so far away. It may be much nearer than we think. Every now and then a sudden death of some one we have known makes us realize the possibility for ourselves. But the impression soon wears off.

And yet how quickly death is coming. How short is even the longest life. If I think of the past years of my life, how quickly they have gone! Once, when I was young, a year seemed a long time, now how short it seems, so quickly does it pass away.

How quickly, and how certainly! I began to die as soon as I was born. My life was passing away even while my body was growing to maturity. Every breath I draw, every beat of my heart, is a step towards death.

> Our hearts, like muffled drums, are beating
> Funeral marches to the grave.

How, then, can I flatter myself that death is far off, when it has already begun?

2. *Its uncertainty. When shall I die?* This year? Next year? In middle life? In old age? Nay, I cannot promise myself a week or even a day.

Where shall I die? At home, or abroad? On a journey? Alone or amongst friends?

How shall I die? By sickness? By an accident? Suddenly, or with time for preparation?

And most important of all, *in what state shall I die?* In the state of grace, or in sin? In fervour, or in lukewarmness?

I know not. Death is certain; all else about it is uncertain.

What conclusion must I draw from this? That which our Lord urges upon us. 'Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour' (*S. Matt.* xxv. 13). The day and the hour are hidden from us, that we may be ready every day and every hour. 'Be ye therefore ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh' (ibid. xxiv. 44).

Well then, am I ready? And if I am not ready to-day, shall I be ready to-morrow? To-morrow too is uncertain. I know not whether for me there will be a to-morrow.

III. I can Die but Once

An error, a failure, here is irreparable. If I could live and die a second time, if I could have a second chance, I might feel more secure. If I were unprepared the first time, I might make sure of the second. I would not run so great a risk twice. But it is not so. It is only once, and once for all. I have only one life to live, one death to die, one soul to save or to lose for ever.

Things which are of great importance, and that can be done only once, I must try to do as well as possible. And to die well, I must make all life a preparation for death.

I will resolve then :—

1. *To live well:* to live true to my conscience and to God For as I have lived, so in all probability I shall die.

2. *To think often of death as if it might be near at hand.* It is perhaps nearer than I should like to think.

3. *To pray every day for the grace of perseverance and a holy death.*

4. *To ask myself from time to time, should I wish to die in my present state?*

5. *To do now what I shall wish that I had done* when I come to look back upon my life, in the light, and at the hour, of death

In Father Bacci's *Life of S. Philip Neri* we read of the death of one of the saint's penitents, Salviati by name. When he had received the last Sacraments with great devotion, and was told that the hour of his departure was at hand, full of joy, he lifted up his hands to heaven, and began singing, '*Laetatus sum in his, quae dicta sunt mihi: in domum Domini ibimus*' (*Ps.* cxxii), and shortly afterwards breathed his last in Philip's arms. God grant that when I too come to die, I may be able to say, like Salviati, 'I was glad when they said unto *me*, We will go into the house of the Lord.'

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiii.

THE GENERAL JUDGEMENT

JUDGEMENT is twofold. There is the particular judgement at the moment of death, when the soul passes into the presence of Jesus and knows whether it is saved or lost; and there is the general judgement at the last day, when 'we must all be made manifest before the judgement-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad' (2 *Cor.* v. 10, R.V.). It is of this we are to think now.

Prel. i. Contemplate our Lord seated on a great white throne, the multitudes standing before Him, the books opened, and each one judged according to his works (*Rev.* xx. 11, 12).

Prel. ii. Pray that you may so judge yourself now, that the Judge may not have to condemn you in that day.

I. THE JUDGE

It is Jesus Christ, who came to be my Saviour, to show me by His example the way of life, to teach me by His words, to make atonement on the Cross for my sins, to give me grace for all my needs, to set before me the rewards of eternal glory. And now my soul comes before Him as my Judge.

Judgement is committed to Him because He is not only God who knows all things, but also Man who can sympathize with our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we are (*S. John* v. 22; *Heb.* iv. 15). He will condemn none whom He can save, but He cannot pass over any sin. For :—

1. *He is a Judge infinitely holy.* 'The heavens are not clean in His sight' and 'His angels He charged with folly' (*Job* xv. 15; iv. 18). How will my soul appear in the splendour of His holiness?

2. *A Judge who is omniscient.* Nothing of my life has been hid from Him. Acts, words, my inmost thoughts, not one of them has escaped His notice. 'O Lord, Thou hast searched me out, and known me. . . . Thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and

about my bed ; and spiest out all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue, but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether' (*Ps.* cxxxix. 1–3).

3. *A Judge infinitely just.* He will ' render to every man according to his deeds ' (*Rom.* ii. 6). He will judge each according to his opportunities : to whom much has been given, of him shall much be required (*S. Luke* xii. 48). I cannot be judged as many who have not had the opportunities I have had, or the graces that have been showered on me. ' If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss ; O Lord, who may abide it ? ' (*Ps.* cxxx. 3).

4. *A Judge infallible and immutable.* He never revokes His sentence, for there is never any error in its truth and justice. I cannot say, ' You have not taken all into account, if you knew all you would judge differently.'

5. *A Judge who is supreme.* There is no appeal from His decision to any higher tribunal.

6. *A Judge who is almighty.* I may rebel against His sentence, but I cannot stay its execution for a moment. However I may have resisted the sweet drawings of His grace, I cannot now resist His sovereign power.

7. *A Judge from whom I cannot escape.* I cannot refuse to appear at His bar. I cannot flee or hide myself from Him. ' If I climb up into heaven Thou art there ; if I go down into hell Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also Thy hand shall hold me. If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day ; the darkness and light to Thee are both alike ' (*Ps.* cxxxix. 7–11).

II. The Persons to be Judged

Every one without exception. ' We must all be made manifest before the judgement-seat of Christ ' (*2 Cor.* v. 10). Think of that manifestation, the secrets of all hearts laid bare before the eyes of men and angels. Yet in that vast multitude I shall be acutely conscious of my own individuality, for :—

1. *I shall have to bear my own burden.* None will be able to help me, or plead for me. Relations, friends, those who have thought well of me, and praised me, those who have blamed me—their praise or blame will not alter the judgement of God. If I have sinned to please others, or through fear of displeasing them, they will not be able to stand by me or help me then. Alone I must bear the burden of my sin, and be judged for it.

2. *I shall be judged as I truly am.* All disguises will be stripped away. If I have deceived others or myself, I cannot deceive my Judge. It will not help me then that I have been thought well of, looked up to, if my life has been rotten at the core; if I have been proud, self-seeking, insincere; if I have cherished some secret sin and refused to give it up, though grace so often urged me. The world may speak well of me, but I shall be judged for what I really am: 'I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead' (*Rev.* iii. 1).

III. The Accusers

1. *Satan.* He will accuse me of all my sins of commission and omission, done at his instigation or through my own malice and perversity; . . . all the sins I might have, and ought to have, prevented in others; . . . all of which I have been the occasion by bad example.

2. *My guardian angel.* He will have to reproach me for rejecting so many of his holy suggestions and warnings. . . . How often my sins have made him turn away his eyes in grief and shame!

3. *The guardian angels of others whom I have led astray.*

4. *The angels who keep watch around the sanctuary and the altar.* They will have to accuse me of my irreverence, carelessness, neglect.

5. *My own conscience.* It will force me to confirm these other witnesses; to face my whole life, all my most secret sins; those which I have tried to forget. . . . Let me listen to my conscience now, that it may not have to bear this terrible witness then. By a good confession now I may

set my conscience right with God, and all my sins will be blotted out.

IV. The Sentence

Holy Scripture speaks of two sentences, one of infinite bliss, the other of infinite misery (*S. Matt.* xxv. 21, 34, 41). Meditate upon these sentences. Think what it will be to hear one or other of them spoken to yourself.

1. *The sentence of acceptance.* 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' What will it be to hear Jesus say, 'Come'? Long ago you heard that voice, and it said to you, 'Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (*S. Matt.* xi. 28). Now it bids you come where there is no more weariness, no more temptation or sin. Once it bade you take up your cross and follow (ibid. xvi. 24), now it welcomes you to the kingdom and the crown.

2. *The sentence of reprobation.* 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' Consider what is involved in this :—

(*a*) *The pain of loss.* The loss of God : 'Depart from Me.' Once the soul thought it could do without God ; now it knows that God alone can satisfy it. It feels an emptiness which God alone can fill, a hunger which He alone can satisfy. Oh that it could love God and feel that it was loved ! But no ; it craves, yet cannot love. It hates, rebels, blasphemes, for it knows that it has lost God for ever.

(*b*) *The pain of sense.* 'Into everlasting fire.' Yes, there are torments in hell, 'wailing and gnashing of teeth,' 'the worm (remorse of conscience) that dieth not,' 'outer darkness,' 'fire unquenchable' (*S. Matt.* xxv. 30, 41 ; *S. Mark* ix. 44).

One or other of these sentences will one day be pronounced on me. Which ? I cannot know for certain ; but this I do know, it will be whichever I choose to make it. The choice is mine, mine to-day ; soon, who knows how soon, it will be mine no more.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiv.

PENITENCE AND ABSOLUTION

PREL. i. S. Luke vii. 36–50. It seems from a comparison with S. Matthew xi. 28–30 that our Lord's last words before entering Simon's house contained the gracious invitation, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Was this woman present when He spoke them? and did He intend them especially for her? It seems likely. She was indeed 'heavy laden' and longed for rest for her soul, therefore she followed Him into the house.

Prel. ii. Contemplate the guests reclining at the feast, our Lord among them; the woman kissing His feet, and watering them with her tears.

Prel. iii. Pray for contrition, the sorrow of love; that being much forgiven, you may love much.

I. HER PENITENCE

1. Think of her prompt obedience to the inspiration of grace. She will not wait for a private interview. She follows at once, into the house of a stranger, among all the guests. Love is stronger than shame, which people fear more than death. She came, not like Nicodemus secretly by night, but in the full light of day, in sight of all, caring nothing for what they might say or think, if only she might come to Him in her penitence.

2. She anointed His feet and watered them with her tears, inwardly beseeching Him to wash her soul with His grace. She wiped them with her hair, praying Him to wipe away the foulness of her sins. She kissed them, longing that He would give her the kiss of pardon and peace. She made what reparation she could, converting the things which had been the instruments of her sin—her eyes, her hair, her lips, her perfumes—into instruments of service to her Lord; realizing, as it were in outward act, the bidding of S. Paul: 'As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness' (*Rom.* vi. 19).

II. Our Lord's Welcome and Forgiveness

1. *It was He who first drew her to Himself.* All penitence comes from Him. We cannot have it of ourselves. But He will give it, if we ask Him.

2. *He gave her courage to come to Him at once,* fearing neither shame nor what others might say or think. He will give me a like courage—courage to bear the shame and pain of confession ; courage to break by one decisive act with my sins and the occasions of them.

3. *He gave her faith, and hope, and love.* Faith, to believe in Him as One who could forgive sins. Hope, that He would not reject her. Love, which drew forth tears of penitence. All these He will give to me, if I ask Him.

4. *He said to her: 'Thy sins be forgiven thee. Go in peace.'* Think what is involved in this word of absolution.

(*a*) *Remission of the penalty due to sin.* When our Lord forgives He does away with the eternal punishment due to our sins. The temporal consequences often remain to be endured. They are for our good, for our chastisement and purification. They are no longer punishment, but loving discipline, and the penitent soul is glad to bear them as some slight penance for its sins. But the eternal punishment, the penalty of hell, that is done away by absolution.

(*b*) *Cleansing.* When God forgives He cleanses the soul from the stains and defilement of sin. Souls covered with the leprosy of manifold sins are made clean as they were on the day of baptism, by the Precious Blood sprinkled upon them in absolution.

(*c*) *Strength.* It is not enough for our Lord to cleanse the soul, He must also heal its wounds, and pour into it life and strength. If we were left in our weakness we should only fall again. But absolution renews the soul's health and strength. It gives power to conquer sins which before it seemed impossible to resist.

(*d*) *Peace.* Our Lord says not only 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' but 'Go in peace.' How restless the soul is in sin. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked' (*Isa.* lvii. 21), but to those who come to Him with penitent hearts He gives 'the blessing of peace' (*Ps.* xxix. 10).

(*e*) *Love.* She came with love. Our Lord, who read her heart, said, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.' But when she was forgiven she loved still more. So absolution will greatly increase our love. Often it will change the imperfect sorrow of attrition which we bring, into contrition, the perfect sorrow of real love. Our deepest, truest, penitence is the fruit of forgiveness, not its cause.

III. Apply this to yourself

Say to yourself, Why should not I share in the blessing which she obtained? Why should not I be forgiven, yea much forgiven? Why should not I have pardon, cleansing, peace? O my Lord, I too will come to Thee. I will not be kept back by fear, or shame, or the remarks of others. I will come to Thee as this woman did. I will come as a sinner, not trusting in my own righteousness, nor in any power to make myself pure and holy. I will come with faith like hers, not doubting either Thy power or Thy love. Thou forgavest her: Thou wilt forgive me. Though I have grieved Thee ten thousand times by my sins, my neglect of duties, my coldness and carelessness in devotion, yet I will come to Thee, drawn by Thy love, trusting in Thy love, hoping in Thy love.

O my Lord, Thou wilt not reject me. I have some little love. If I had not I should not desire to come to Thee. I will cast myself at Thy feet, till Thou dost pierce my heart with the wound of love, and the tears of penitence flow forth. Thou art the same that Thou hast ever been, the Friend of sinners. Thou art not changed. Thy heart is the same now in heaven as once on earth, full of love and compassion, ready to forgive. I will come to Thee in full assurance of faith and hope, sinner though I am, ungrateful as I have ever been, weak and helpless as I still shall be. Thou wilt pardon. Thou wilt cleanse. Thou wilt heal and strengthen. Thou wilt pour Thy love into my soul, and much forgiven, I too will love Thee much.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxi; III. viii.

THE KINGDOM AND CALL OF CHRIST

At this point of the retreat, as we pass from the exercises of the purgative way to those of the illuminative, S. Ignatius would have us meditate upon the kingdom and the call of Christ.

Prel. i. Contemplate Christ our Lord as the great Captain of our salvation (*Heb.* ii. 10), calling all men to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace not to be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

I. The Call of Christ

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our eternal King. He came into the world to vanquish the devil, and to bring the fallen world back again to God. None can come unto the Father but by Him. He is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life' (*S. John* xiv. 6). He has taken our nature upon Him, entering into all our experiences of temptation, toil, and suffering. But through that suffering He has triumphed. 'I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death' (*Rev.* i. 18). And now from His heavenly throne He calls all men, '*and each one in particular*,' to follow Him in His warfare, and, when the victory is won, to share His kingdom and His glory. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne' (*Rev.* iii. 21).

2. Think of Him standing before you and saying, 'My will is to draw all men unto Me, to lead them to fight under My banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and to give them hereafter a share in My kingdom and glory. Wilt thou come and take thy part with Me, and help Me in this warfare?'

3. Consider what it is to which He calls you. When in 1914 the young men of England and the overseas dominions

heard the call of king and country, how many thousands of the best and bravest answered promptly, and gave themselves and all to serve! But great and noble as that enterprise was, this to which Christ calls you is greater still. It is to fight against sin in yourself and in others; to win souls for Christ, not by force of arms, but by bearing witness to Him, reproducing His life in yours so as to manifest Him to others. Christ gave Himself for you, and now gives Himself to you, not merely that you yourself may be saved, but that you may be a fellow-worker with Him in labouring for the salvation of others. This is the warfare to which He calls you.

4. But if you are to do this, you must first establish His kingdom in your own heart. You must conquer yourself, your pride, your self-will, your sensuality, your sloth. You must labour, with the help of grace, to destroy in yourself every sinful affection and desire, to banish from your soul every temper contrary to the spirit of Jesus, so that He may live and reign in you. Unless you are trying to do this you cannot really work for the extension of His kingdom, or hope to win others to His obedience. His kingdom is indeed a kingdom of freedom—freedom from the bondage of selfishness and sin; it is a kingdom also of joy and peace; but you will not be able to persuade others of this, unless you know its truth in your own experience. Therefore it is that the kingdom must first be established in your own heart, before you can win others to it. Christ must live and rule in you, before He can use you for His work in winning others.

II. My Answer

In one sense I have made my answer long ago. Long ago I was enrolled as a soldier under Christ's banner, and promised to follow Him in His warfare. At my baptism I was signed with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter I should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto my life's end. And this purpose and promise I renewed when I was confirmed. It is therefore a warfare to which I am already pledged.

How have I kept the promise then made? Must I not confess that I have thought too little about it, that often I have been slothful or cowardly, and have even deserted Christ and gone over to the enemy?

But now He calls me once again. In my meditation He comes to me and says, 'My son, I am ready to forgive thee all the past, all thy unfaithfulness and rebellion. Once more I invite thee to follow Me. If thou wilt accept My invitation and follow Me with all thine heart, I will give thee victory over all thine enemies. Look to Me, and thus looking thy heart will be drawn to Me, and thou wilt desire to come with Me. See, I have taken thy nature upon Me, and know thy weakness and thy needs. I know the greatness of the struggle. I know what temptation and suffering are. In all things I have gone before thee, and borne the brunt of the battle; and now I will be with thee to strengthen thee. For I am Almighty to save, "able to keep thee from falling, and to present thee faultless at last before the presence of My Father, in My eternal and glorious kingdom"' (*S. Jude* 24).

Thus Christ invites you to follow Him, and not only to follow Him, but to help Him in winning others to His service. He says to you not only 'Follow Me,' but 'Come and help Me.' Think of the love with which He invites you to take part with Him in His warfare, not only or chiefly because He needs you, but because He loves you. Think of your own poor return of love hitherto, till you are humbled to the dust. How the angels must wonder if you should hold back from the love of Jesus, dying for you, calling you now to be His fellow-worker in the extension of His kingdom!

What answer are you going to make to His invitation?

Will you not here and now renew your allegiance to Christ, the great Captain of your salvation? Will you not resolve to give yourself anew to Him, to follow Him more faithfully, more generously, more courageously, more perseveringly?

If this is the desire of your heart, then kneel in His

presence, and say to Him, ' Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee ; I will try to help Thee. I will give myself to Thee without reserve. Every sin and evil temper which hinders Thy reign within my heart, do Thou destroy. Everything that keeps me back from Thee, do Thou take away from me. Every sacrifice Thou callest me to make, I will gladly make. This only do I desire, to be wholly and for ever Thine ; to win others to Thy love and service ; to help Thee to extend Thy kingdom in the hearts of men.'

Imitation of Christ, II. i ; III. lvi.

THE INCARNATION A HEALING

PREL. i. The Body of Christ in the midst of the humanity whence it was taken, as a glowing coal in the midst of dead ashes that have lost their light and heat.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may experience the quickening power of the new life which Christ comes to give us.

I. THE DEADNESS OF HUMAN NATURE

1. Death was the penalty of Adam's sin—death both natural and supernatural. His soul died at once, for it lost the sanctifying grace of God which was its life. His body too fell under the sentence of death. It became liable to sickness, decay, and dissolution. The poison of sin had entered into both body and soul, introducing into them a threefold concupiscence, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' (1 *S. John* ii. 16). So decay and death began.

2. Think of the increasing manifestation of decay all through the history of the human race—the wickedness of the world before the Flood; of Sodom and Gomorrah; of Babylon, Egypt, Assyria; of Greece and Rome in the days of their decline. See S. Paul's description of the Gentile world in his days (*Rom.* i. 18–32).

3. Nor was it different among the Jews. Think of the many wicked kings of Judah and Israel, from whom nevertheless Christ was descended according to the flesh. Think what the whole nation had become, even after the purging discipline of the Babylonian captivity—what it was in our Lord's time. Thus the decay and corruption continued irremediable up to the moment of the Incarnation, when the Word, in whom was life, was Himself made flesh.

II. THE NEW LIFE OF HUMANITY IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST

1. Contemplate the lowly house at Nazareth, and the Angel Gabriel saluting the Blessed Virgin: 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee. . . Behold,

thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus : for He shall save His people from their sins' (*S. Luke* i. 28, 31 ; *S. Matt.* i. 21). And Mary said, ' Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word ' (*S. Luke* i. 38).

2. So ' the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth ' (*S. John* i. 14). Oh, wonderful love and power of God ! At once in the Person of the Incarnate Son the decay of human nature was arrested. Outside of Christ, apart from Him, man must become worse and worse. But in Him decay and corruption are arrested. In Him the life of man is organized anew, so that all his faculties operate in their true subordination to reason and conscience, while the rational will is true to the will of God. In Him man is brought back to the state of Adam before the Fall, and indeed to a far closer union with God, for in Christ the union of Godhead and manhood is indissoluble. The grace of this union can never be forfeited.

3. Thus in Christ the Divine Life, which belongs to Him inalienably as the eternal Son of God, fills His human nature and makes it to be a fountain of cleansing and renewal to all who come to Him.

III. The Spread of Life from the Humanity of Jesus to all who are Incorporated into Him

1. All of us need this new life. Christ does not save the dead in their deadness. He saves them, not *in* their sins, which are the cause of decay and death, but *from* their sins (*S. Matt.* i. 21). He saves them by giving them new life (1 *S. John* v. 11).

2. But this can only be by our incorporation into Him. The fact of Christ taking our nature in His own Person could not give us new life, even if we were as closely allied to Him by natural relationship as His Blessed Mother. We must obtain the new life by being taken into His body. We must be ' born again of water and of the Spirit ' (*S. John* iii. 5). And then having been born again, we can only retain the life by feeding upon His Body and Blood.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.' But 'he that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him' (*S. John* vi. 53, 56), and 'hath eternal life,' because he 'lives by Me' (*vv.* 54, 57).

3. Thus it is that the Divine Life which is in Christ passes into us, cleansing and renewing our whole nature, body and soul. And so, as we approach the altar, we pray that 'our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us.' Our state of decay does not hinder God's purpose in sending us health and a cure in His only-begotten Son. Our defilements will not keep Him away, if we are penitent, and want to be raised out of our sins. Our weakness is no hindrance to His power, if we yield ourselves to Him.

4. What hope this should give us! However weak we are, however stained with sins, and held in bondage by habits of sin, yea though we be dead in sin, that is no hindrance to the power of God, if only we come to Him in penitence for absolution, and then come to Communion for renewal of life and health. Think again of our Prelude, the live coal in the midst of the dead ashes. That glowing coal has power to kindle the whole mass. So the body of Christ has power to transmute a whole world. It can kindle into life and fervour every one who devoutly receives It in Holy Communion.

5. This is indeed not the work of a day. It is the work of a lifetime. It is the purpose of our life in this world, with all its discipline of trial and temptation, and all its opportunities of grace, that we should be transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ; that our old sinful nature should be put off, and the new nature of Christ within us take its place, till at last we can say with S. Paul, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (*Gal.* ii. 20).

Thus, then, meditate upon the Incarnation as a healing. Consider the deadness and corruption of human nature; the new life brought to humanity in the Person of Christ;

and the communication of this life to those who are incorporated into Him. And in your prayer make acts of thankfulness for so great a grace. And then tell God how sorry you are for your continuing deadness in spite of His gift of lif and healing. Think what you might have been by now, if you had used the gift aright, and what in fact you are. But still there is hope. Whatever may be the failures of the past and your present weakness, the grace of the Incarnation can meet and heal it all. Oh, how Christ will welcome you now, if you come to Him in your prayer and tell Him that you want to be healed of all your sin, and set free to serve Him henceforth in newness of life.

Imitation of Christ, III. lv.

THE PASSION OF JESUS

In the Passion of Jesus we behold the Captain of our salvation going before us in all manner of labours and sufferings, bearing the brunt of every trial and temptation we may have to endure, and developing thereby within Himself those powers of grace which are to help us in our conflicts.

Prel. i. 'Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps' (1 *S. Pet.* ii. 21). Think of all that our Lord suffered from the time that He was taken captive in the Garden of Gethsemane till His death upon the Cross.

Prel. ii. Pray that in this meditation you may learn how to use the grace of the Passion of Jesus to help you in the discipline of daily life, and in special times of suffering.

I. In Daily Life

How will the Passion help me in the difficulties and temptations of my daily life?

Let me look at my life from outside, as if I were advising another. What are the most likely dangers and temptations for one with a character and in circumstances like my own? Then, having found the weak places, and noted the symptoms of the moral disease, I will look for the antidote in the Passion of Jesus.

1. I find, for instance, that I am tempted to think too much of the good opinion of others, to love popularity, to compromise when I ought, in loyalty to Christ, to take a strong and clear line. So I have not the courage of my convictions. I am afraid to confess Christ in word or act.

What is the antidote in the life of Christ—that life which was always lived under the shadow of the Cross from Nazareth to Calvary?

See Him, even in boyhood, beginning life with that great utterance, 'I must be about My Father's business' (*S. Luke* ii. 49). In manhood still going on in the way marked out for Him by God, refusing to do what would have won popularity and acceptance, because it was not the will of

His Father. Then in the last hours of His Passion, alone, deserted by His friends, bearing solitary witness to the truth, at the cost of ignominy, suffering, and death.

I contemplate that life, so firm, so unmoved by what men said or did, so loyal to truth and to the will of God; and I say, 'God helping me, I will live true to my conscience and to God, not for the praise or blame of men. I too must be about my Father's business.'

The antidote has flowed in. I have found strength in the Passion of Jesus to resist cowardice and human respect; to act with a single eye to duty and the approval of God.

2. Another temptation—luxury, the worship of ease and comfort. It grows upon us so stealthily. We only find out when deprived of our comforts how soft and effeminate we have become.

Again, in prayer I contemplate our Lord. I see Him bound, dragged through the streets of Jerusalem to Annas, to Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again—with no food, no rest—scourged, bearing His Cross to Calvary, crucified. He might have called for twelve legions of angels and saved Himself; but that was not His Father's will. He had been trained in the school of suffering from childhood onward. He had 'learned obedience by the things which He suffered' (*Heb.* v. 8). So when tempted to sloth, softness, self-indulgence, as I contemplate the Passion I find the antidote I need.

3. Or my temptation is to irritability, sharpness of temper, pride which resents every slight or injury. I will contemplate the brutality and ignominy of the Passion—the false witness, the blows, the spitting, the mockery, the injustice of the scourging, and in all this the patience and silence of our Lord. 'He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth' (*Isa.* liii. 7). So I find the antidote, the power of the Passion to strengthen me in all temptations to anger and resentment.

II. In Times of Suffering

Sooner or later suffering comes to all—pain, weakness, anxieties, disappointments, home troubles, spiritual trials.

How shall we gain strength from the Passion? Just as before: 'What is my danger, my temptation, in suffering? What remedy can I find in the Passion?'

1. One danger is to 'despise the chastening of the Lord' (*Heb.* xii. 5), to disregard its meaning, to look upon it as a mere interruption to one's work, a thing to be endured as best one may. God's hand, God's purpose, in it is not recognized; so when the unwelcome interruption is over, we go back to our ordinary life and work, and forget.

Yet the sickness, the trial, whatever it was, came from God. It was intended for our good, for our conversion or our sanctification. It was a taking of us apart because God wanted to say something to us.

Our temptation, then, is to forget God, looking at the suffering or the trial apart from Him.

And the remedy? We turn again to our Lord, and contemplate Him. In all His vast sufferings He never lost sight of God's will, God's purpose. 'The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?' (*S. John* xviii. 11). 'Thou couldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above' (*S. John* xix. 11). So from the Passion of Jesus we learn to accept suffering as coming to us from the Fatherly hand of God, and to recognize what He wants to teach us by it.

2. Another danger—to 'faint' under suffering, to give way to despondency, to complain, or to rebel. The wounded heart or suffering body makes us want to be alone, away from the demands of others for help and sympathy. So selfishness poisons our life. It is the natural tendency of suffering, apart from grace, to make us selfish, complaining, rebellious.

And the antidote? Contemplate the unselfish life, the unfailing sympathy, of the Man of Sorrows. Surely He had pain and sorrow enough of His own to bear. Yet, how forgetful of Himself! how ready to help and comfort others —Peter who denied Him, the thief crucified by His side, His Blessed Mother, and S. John!

As we contemplate Him we begin to feel that there is a power in the Passion of Jesus, which the Holy Ghost can bring to us in our need, able to make us, in our weakness,

or sorrow, or pain, patient, considerate, thoughtful for others.

So when we are tempted to faint under sorrow or suffering, whether of body or soul, let us look to our Lord in His Passion, sure that He enters into all we feel because of His sympathy as man—a sympathy perfected by experience of all, and far more than all, that we can ever have to suffer ; and then, because He is also very God, He can pour into us His own divine strength—can even make us to be ' joyful in all our tribulation,' and to ' glory in our infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon us ' (2 *Cor.* vii. 4 ; xii. 9).

Thus let us contemplate our Lord in His Passion as our Example and our Helper. In every act of His life, in every suffering of His Passion, He was developing within Himself strength and grace for us in our needs. And as we look up to Him in our prayer, the power, the grace, of the Passion will be poured into us.

O Lord Jesus, grant that in every struggle with temptation, and in every suffering I have to bear, I may look to Thee, not only as my Example, but also as the Captain of my salvation, able and ready to pour into me, in my weakness, the strength of Thy victorious Passion, so that in all things I may live to the glory of Thy grace.

Imitation of Christ, II. xi. xii.

THE WALK TO EMMAUS

PREL. i. S. Luke xxiv. 13–27.

Prel. ii. Our Lord joining the two disciples and walking with them.

Prel. iii. Pray that you may have Jesus for your constant Companion and Teacher.

I. OUR LORD JOINS THE TWO DISCIPLES

He overtakes them as a stranger travelling the same way. At first they did not recognize Him. 'Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.' They went on with their talk, and He walked beside them in silence. Yet He was listening to their words, and had compassion on their sorrow. At length He spoke to them, 'What manner of communications are these that ye have one with another as ye walk and are sad?' They were surprised at such a question. How could any one sojourning at Jerusalem, even if a stranger, be ignorant of events which were the talk of the whole city! They little thought that they themselves were the persons who were ignorant, and that this stranger was the very One about whom they were so earnestly talking!

Meditate thus upon our Lord joining these two disciples in their walk and discoursing with them as a stranger. Does it not teach us to hope that He is not far from us also, whenever in our ordinary occupations, our work, our walks and talks with one another, our hearts and thoughts are mindful of Him, and our words, it may be, sometimes are about Him? We may be sure that He draws near to us at such times, and is our Companion, though we see Him not.

Does it not hold out to us a possibility of a life in which the risen Lord may be our constant Companion; a life in which His promise may be fulfilled to each one of us individually, 'Lo, I am with you always'? (*S. Matt.* xxviii. 20).

This is a possibility for every one of us, but it depends

on ourselves whether we shall realize it or not. Christ is ever drawing near to us, and inviting us to draw near to Him. He is ever ready to walk with us in the journey of daily life, if we will choose to walk with Him. Alas! that so often our thoughts and our words are such that they rather repel Him, and invite the spirits of evil to be our companions.

How much, then, depends upon the discipline of our thoughts and words! The companionship of Jesus is the true joy of our hearts. If we have ever tasted the sweetness of His presence, we shall be careful not to forfeit it by any fault of our own. He reads our thoughts; let us see that we harbour none which are unworthy of Him. He hears our words; let us take care to utter none that may grieve Him. There is nothing that will more help us to abide in His presence than this watchful guard over our thoughts and words. Nothing which will help us more to realize the blessedness of a state in which the risen Lord is the constant Companion of our daily life.

II. They tell Him of their Sorrow and Perplexity

Their hopes had received a great shock in the Crucifixion, and yet they could not altogether give them up. Their hearts still clung to Him whom they had lost. Though sorrowful and perplexed they did not cease to be disciples, nor to think and speak of Him.

In this they are an example to us in all our times of perplexity and sorrow. Such times will come to most of us—times when faith and hope fail—times of doubt and perplexity—times of spiritual dryness and desolation—times when God seems to hide His face from us. In all such experiences let us learn from these two disciples not to seek relief in the business or the pleasures of the world, but in that which was their comfort, though they did not fully know it at the time. Let us tell our Lord of our trouble; and then we may be sure that, whether we feel the comfort of His presence or not, He is not far from us, and sooner or later He will lighten our sorrow and clear away our doubts.

At the same time we must not let our sorrow or our perplexities make us neglect practical duties, though we seem to have no heart for them. Often it is just while we force ourselves to do some commonplace duty, that we shall find our sadness or our doubts pass away. Christ comes to meet us in works of active charity and brotherly love. He comes to us, as to these disciples, in the form of a stranger. He comes to us in the form of those who need our help, our sympathy, our encouragement; and as we try to help them we shall find that the heaviness and darkness will pass away, and that in ministering to others we have been really ministering to Him.

III. Our Lord Explains the Scriptures

'He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.' And as He taught them He opened their understandings, and kindled their affections.

What must it have been to be thus taught by Christ Himself! No wonder their hearts 'burned within' them, and their hope came back, and their faith which had well-nigh failed, was fanned into a flame.

A like experience may be ours. Christ is present with us to teach us the mysteries of Holy Scripture. Without His teaching we cannot understand them aright. Human learning will not suffice. Spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned. Christ, by His Holy Spirit, whom He has promised to them that ask Him, must open and illuminate our understandings. It is thus that He exercises His prophetic office as the Teacher both of the Church and of the individual soul. It is the promise of the new dispensation, 'They shall be all taught of God' (*S. John* vi. 45). Christ did not reveal the truth once for all, and leave it written in a book. It was to be made a living truth by the inward teaching of the Holy Ghost.

So as we study Holy Scripture, let us look to Christ to be our Teacher. He will make His Holy Spirit to enlighten our understanding and kindle our affections. As we read and meditate He will take the words—words which have long been familiar—and give them such a force and meaning,

suited to our needs, that it will seem to us as if we had never understood them before. Thus it is that Christ will reveal Himself to us in Holy Scripture, opening our understandings and making our hearts to burn within us, while He talks with us by the way.

Imitation of Christ, II. viii ; III. i, ii.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

PREL. i. Acts ii. 1–4.

Prel. ii. The room where the Apostles are assembled, and the Holy Ghost descending upon them in the likeness of fiery tongues.

Prel. iii. Pray that you may be filled with the Holy Ghost, so as to live and act in the power of His holy inspiration.

I. WAITING FOR THE GIFT

The Apostles and others were gathered together, as it were in retreat, at Jerusalem, waiting for the promised gift of the Comforter. How would He come to them? Would they be permitted to see Him, or would His presence be altogether inward in their hearts? They could not tell.

At last the day of Pentecost came, and with it the sound as of a mighty wind, and the fiery tongues, parting asunder and sitting upon each of them.

The wind and the fire were not the Spirit Himself, but only outward tokens of His coming. They passed away. What remained? Only by experience did the Apostles come to know. Only as they found themselves endued with powers beyond themselves. Only in the experience of daily life, with its trials and needs, did they gradually come to know all that the blessed gift meant. The record of their discoveries is to be found in their writings.

II. SOME OF THE THINGS THEY TELL US

1. The first great discovery that the Apostles made was that the coming of the Holy Spirit was the fulfilment of our Lord's promise: 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you' (*S. John* xiv. 18, 20). The Spirit came not to supply the place of an absent Christ, but to effect His abiding presence. With the Spirit, Christ came again to be not merely with them, but within them. This experience was the foundation of all that the Apostles tell us about the indwelling

presence of Christ. They came to know Him no longer 'after the flesh' (2 *Cor.* v. 16), but as Christ in them, in their hearts now, and 'the hope of glory' hereafter (*Col.* i. 27). The Holy Ghost has come to us, to lead us on to this same experimental knowledge of Christ within ourselves.

2. *S. Paul speaks of Him as 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.'* He prays that God would give to his Ephesian converts 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; the eyes of their hearts (τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας) being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints' (*Eph.* i. 17, 18). Observe that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation acts not on the intellect only, but primarily upon the heart, the affections. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us whatever we know of Christ. He receives of the things of Christ and shows them unto us (*S. John* xvi. 14), opening the eyes of our hearts to see and love them.

So we need to pray for this Spirit of revelation to give us ever fresh and deeper views of our calling in Christ, and of all the divine possibilities of it. This is the purpose of our daily meditation, that we may be taught more and more deeply the things of Christ, by the inward teaching of the Holy Ghost (*S. John* xiv. 26; 1 *S. John* ii. 20, 27). Think of it as you say the *Veni Creator*.

3. *He is the Spirit of prayer.* How greatly we need His help in our prayers. We come to outgrow to a great extent books of devotion. They do not help us as they once did. We need to learn to pray without books. For this we have the promised help of the Holy Ghost, the only real Teacher of prayer (*Rom.* viii. 26; *Eph.* vi. 18; *S. Jude* 20).

4. *He is the Spirit of joy and thanksgiving.* 'Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (*Eph.* v. 18–20). It is the gift of the Spirit which is to enable us to be thankful. And we are to give thanks 'always' and 'for all things,' in adversity as well as in pros-

perity. S. John Chrysostom accustomed himself in every trouble and suffering to say 'glory be to God.' Thus he gave God thanks 'at all times,' however troubled and sad the lower part of his soul might be. It is a great act of love to God thus to give Him thanks for all things, especially in times of adversity and depression. And often it will lift us out of ourselves and our despondency, into the joy of God, which is our strength (*Neh.* viii. 10).

III. Some Laws of the Spirit's Working

1. *The Spirit is given in answer to prayer.* It is a gift we must ask for; but if we ask, it will certainly be given. 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?' (*S. Luke* xi. 13). In your meditation dwell upon that 'how much more.' How sure we may be that we shall have the gift if we ask for it.

2. *The Spirit works in proportion as hindrances are removed,* e.g. dissipation of heart and mind; lack of order in our life; giving ourselves too freely and engrossingly to outward things; indulgence in what seem little sins. There must be some measure of real self-discipline in every Christian life, holding ourselves back from things that deaden and choke the life of the Spirit in us. But the ascetic life, in whatever measure we are led by the Spirit of God to practise it, will not make us gloomy, or sad, or unfit for the work we have to do. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, joy, peace, and power. Where He dwells there must be both joy and power (*Gal.* v. 22; *2 Tim.* i. 7).

We are accustomed to pray after our Communions, 'Blood of Christ inebriate me.' The Blood inebriates, i.e. cheers and gladdens, because the Holy Ghost is the life of that Blood which we receive from the chalice; and the more He takes possession of us, the more we shall be lifted up into His joy. So we may confidently look for this supernatural joyousness in proportion as all that hinders the Spirit's work in us is removed. Think of this when you receive in the chalice the 'Wine that maketh glad the heart of man' (*Ps.* civ. 15).

3. *The Spirit is already in us.* In order to be filled with

the Spirit we have only to use, in faith, a power which will be discovered in the using. 'Be filled with the Spirit' (*Eph.* v. 18). S. Paul is not speaking of the initial work of the Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, but of our use and development of the gift then given. The verb (πληροῦσθε) is in the present tense. It speaks not of receiving a full measure once for all, but of the continual filling up from that which is already there, as the marble basin is continually replenished by the spring of water welling up within it (cf. *S. John* iv. 14).

And the precept implies a corresponding promise. It implies that the Spirit will fill us, will take possession of us and flood our whole being if we will let Him. And the promise is for very ordinary people. At Ephesus it was for every Christian—husband, wife, parent, child, master, and slave. They were all meant, whatever their station and work, to live lives divinely full—filled with the Spirit. And what the precept and the promise meant at Ephesus they mean for us to-day. We too are to be filled with the Spirit; to let the Spirit dwell in us richly, as the living water ever springing up within us. Then our lives will be full of love, joy, peace, and spiritual power.

We have thought of the gift of the Spirit, of some of the discoveries the Apostles made concerning it, and of some laws of the Spirit's working. Now we have to go out and act upon what we have learnt. We have to go out from retreat with a glow in our hearts; with steadfastness of purpose; with a spirit of thankfulness and joy. Let us open our hearts to desire and receive more and more of this divine gift. If we have the Holy Spirit we have all. Whatever is good, lovely, pure, strong, uplifting; whatever is a power to work the work of God in ourselves, and through us in others—all is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Let us resolve to think more of the Holy Spirit and His work in us than we have done. Let us not forget Him in our devotions. It is He who will reveal Christ to us, and form Christ in us. Let us pray that we may experience His renewing power day by day.

Collect, Christmas Day.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxvii.

PERSEVERANCE

PREL. i. Hebrews xii. 1, 2.

Prel. ii. The cloud of saints above watching us, as the spectators in the amphitheatre watched the contests in the arena below.

Prel. iii. Pray that you may run with patience the race set before you, and persevere to the end.

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A RACE

1. *The race.* 'Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?' (1 *Cor.* ix. 24). S. Paul thinks of the Christian life as a race. But there is a difference between the earthly and the spiritual race. In the earthly, only one could win the prize: in the spiritual, all will be crowned who persevere to the end.

2. *The spectators.* The 'great cloud of witnesses,' the saints who watch us. They are not merely spectators: they sympathize with us, love us, pray for us, that we too may persevere to the end. They have a personal interest in us, for they know that without us they cannot be made perfect (*Heb.* xi. 40). Not till the full number of God's elect is made complete, not till each has won his crown, or if he fails, till another takes his place and wins it, will they enter into the fullness of their joy.

3. *Think of their joy at each success, their sorrow at every failure,* their anxiety when they see us wavering, and know not whether we shall give up and fall out of the race, or by the grace of God take heart again, and press on till we reach the goal at last.

4. *Think how their example should encourage us.* They were once as we are, with like difficulties of nature and of circumstances; men of like passions with ourselves, tempted in the same way that we are tempted. But the grace of God made them strong to persevere. And the same grace is ours now. It is amply sufficient for all our

needs. It will never fail us, if only we will ask for it, and use it.

II. How we are to Run our Race

'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.'

1. '*Let us lay aside.*' There is something which must be laid aside, got rid of :—

(*a*) '*Every weight*' : the burden of past sin. Till this has been laid aside I cannot run or even start upon the race. But, thank God, my confession and absolution have set me free. And now 'I will run the way of Thy commandments, for Thou hast set my heart at liberty' (*Ps.* cxix. 32).

(*b*) '*The sin which doth so easily beset us*' ; clinging like a garment which entangles us and hinders our progress. All sin, of course, but especially that which is my besetting sin. There are many reasons why I should begin with this. It is the root most likely of many other sins. It springs from the most corrupt part of myself. It harms me most, because it is the sin for which I have most love. It interferes with, or overshadows, every grace. Other faults lie more on the surface of my nature ; this goes to the very depths of my soul, and intertwines itself with many other sins. But then the more it spreads, the more, if I uproot it, will my heart become good ground, freed from weeds and thorns which hinder the growth of the good seed.

2. '*Let us run with patience,*' *or endurance.* This means I must bear the toil and weariness of sustained effort, not growing slack in prayer, watchfulness, self-discipline, and keeping good rules. It means constantly to pick myself up after a fall ; to be humble enough to begin again and again, relying upon the renewing power of the Holy Ghost. This is perseverance.

3. *And perseverance is something I must have.* Without it all else will be lost. It is not the beginning well, nor the going on well for a time, that avails ; but enduring to the

end. Judas gave up much to follow our Lord, but not the one besetting sin of covetousness. That sin poisoned all his life, and worked his ruin in the end. Demas followed S. Paul in his labours for the Gospel for a time, but in the end forsook him, 'having loved this present world' (2 *Tim.* iv. 10). Yes, I must run my race with patience, endurance, perseverance to the end.

III. Helps to Perseverance

'Looking unto Jesus the Leader and Perfecter of our faith.'

1. '*Looking unto Jesus*' (ἀφορῶντες εἰς Ἰησοῦν). Looking off *from* ourselves, and all else, *to* Jesus. If I look to myself I shall fail. I know how I have failed in the past. I had good desires, but they died away. I made resolutions, but I did not keep them. I have been to retreats, but the help they gave me did not last. If I look at the difficulties I shall have to meet, I shall be like S. Peter when he looked away from Jesus to the dark heaving waves and began to sink.

I must look to Jesus. This is the secret of perseverance—to know my own utter helplessness, and then to look to Jesus for everything, for sympathy, guidance, upholding, for the crown at last.

2. '*The Leader of our faith.*' The word (ἀρχηγός) takes me back to the meditation on the kingdom of Christ, in which I thought of our Lord as the Leader and Captain of our salvation, calling us to fight under His banner, and Himself going before us as our Leader, bearing the brunt of the warfare, and enduring far more than I can ever be called to bear. So He is able to feel with me, in that He too has suffered being tempted, and has been made perfect through suffering.

Thus the encouragement to be drawn from the great cloud of witnesses passes into the supreme encouragement which springs from the contemplation of Christ, who has Himself gone before me and shown me the way, and now waits to crown my perseverance by welcoming me into His own eternal joy. 'Father, I will that they whom Thou

hast given Me be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me ' (*S. John* xvii. 24).

3. '*And the Perfecter of our faith.*' He brings it to completion by giving us the grace of perseverance. Perseverance is a grace we cannot merit. It is entirely the gift of God. How glad we may be that it is so ! If it depended on ourselves, how almost certainly we should fail. But we may trust God, for we know that His will is our sanctification (1 *Thess.* iv. 3). How sure, then, we may be that He will give the grace of perseverance to those who ask Him, and try to be faithful day by day. ' When one that was in anxiety of mind, often wavering between hope and fear, did once, being oppressed with grief, humbly prostrate himself in a church before the altar in prayer, and said within himself, Oh, if I knew that I should yet persevere ! he presently heard within himself an answer from God, which said, If thou didst know it, what wouldest thou do ? Do now what thou wouldest do then, and thou shalt be secure ' (*Imitation of Christ*, I. xxv. 2).

So, in ending my retreat, I will pray for this grace of perseverance, and try to be faithful to God day by day in little things ; and so doing I may be sure that He who has begun a good work in me, will perfect it to the end (*Phil.* i. 6).

Collect, All Saints' Day.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxv ; III. xlvii, xlix.

RETREAT III

Retreat III. Meditation I.

THE FIRST ANNOTATION

S. IGNATIUS begins his book with twenty *Annotations* which explain the nature and purpose of the Exercises, and how they are to be adapted to different classes of persons. They are intended chiefly for the guidance of conductors of retreats, but some of them are useful also for retreatants. The first of them will furnish some thoughts for our introductory meditation.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

S. Ignatius says : ' As to go for a walk, to take a journey, and to run, are bodily exercises, so under the name of spiritual exercises is to be understood every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, etc.'

' To go for a walk, to take a journey, to run '—the ideas expressed by these words may easily be transferred from bodily to spiritual exercises. Thus, there are many who go through their spiritual exercises, prayers, self-examination, meditation, in such a way as never to make any real progress. They neither overcome their faults nor acquire solid virtues. And the reason is that they are like men who merely walk up and down for the sake of exercise, returning again to the point from which they set out. They go through their prayers, self-examination, and meditation, in an aimless way, merely to satisfy their consciences that they have not omitted them, but without any definite end in view. If they make any resolutions, they are feeble and half-hearted, and when the time comes for putting them into practice they forget them, or have not the will to carry

them out. Thus, after many half-hearted and ineffectual desires, they remain just what they were at the beginning. They make no progress.

Others, on the contrary, keep the end always in view. They look upon their spiritual exercises not merely as duties to be got through, but as means to overcome themselves and their sins, and to make progress in the life of grace. It is these who advance in the spiritual life, and sometimes with such swiftness that they may be said to run, and even to fly, rather than to walk ; according to the words of the prophet, 'They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary' (*Isa.* xl. 31).

How am I going to make this retreat? As one that merely saunters on an aimless ramble, or like one who takes a journey with a definite end in view; or better still, as one who runs in a race, striving with all his might to reach the goal? (*Phil.* iii. 13, 14). It is in this last way that S. Ignatius would have me enter upon my retreat, with a serious purpose and an ardent desire to press onward in correspondence with the grace God will give me, and towards the end to which He calls me.

II. The Purpose of these Exercises

1. 'To prepare and dispose the soul to rid itself of all inordinate affections.' By an inordinate affection is meant any attachment, desire, or inclination which is a hindrance to one's end—the love and service of God and the salvation of one's soul. The first purpose, then, of the exercises of a retreat is to get rid of those sins and unruly passions, which are the chief hindrances to our choosing the will of God, and running the race that is set before us.

2. 'After the soul has rid itself' of these inordinate affections, then the second purpose of the Exercises is to help the soul 'to seek and to find the divine will in the ordering of one's life with a view to the salvation of one's soul.' The words 'after it has rid itself' are not, however, to be understood as if a complete uprooting of our evil passions was meant, which is often the work of a lifetime, but rather of such mastery over them that they shall not

hinder us from ordering our life according to the purpose and will of God. Till we have conquered ourselves so far as this, we shall neither have the light to see what is God's will for us, nor the courage and strength to carry it out.

'To seek and to find.' *To seek* is our part, *to find* is the gift of God; but it will certainly be given to those who seek. 'Seek and ye shall find' (*S. Matt.* vii. 7).

'With a view to the salvation of one's soul.' The salvation here spoken of is not merely the soul's escape from hell, but all that growth in grace which God has designed for each one of us in this life and in eternity.

It is with good reason, then, that S. Ignatius speaks of the Exercises as '*preparing and disposing*' the soul for all this. For it will not be accomplished in a single retreat. Still, those who put their whole heart into a retreat do often gain immense fruit, and are carried forward a long way upon their journey. Many have gone out from a well-made retreat to live an altogether new and changed life, and, by the grace of God, have persevered and made progress in it to the end.

III. Dispositions Required

1. *Remember that God has His purpose for you in this retreat.* It is He who has brought you here. He means it for your good. He has prepared some great blessing for you. Do not miss that blessing by any carelessness or fault on your part. Try to-night, at the outset, to realize the solemnity and importance of your retreat. You cannot leave it just as you came to it. You must be the better or the worse for it. You will have to answer for it at the day of judgement.

2. *Desire to know God's will for you.* Ask Him earnestly to show you what it is, and to give you grace to do it, whether it be the re-ordering and amendment of your whole life, or some step onward God invites you to take now, or His vocation for you in the future. 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' 'Speak, for Thy servant heareth.'

3. *Be generous and courageous, ready to do all that God asks of you, whatever it may cost you.* He will not ask

more than you can give. He will give you grace equal to the demand. Remember the words of Blessed Mary to the servants, 'Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it' (*S. John* ii. 5). They obeyed, and the water was changed into wine. So will it be with you: the blessing will be beyond all that you can ask or think.

4. *Be patient.* If you are tried with weariness, distractions, spiritual dryness, distaste for prayer, temptations of whatever kind—it is Satan trying to hinder God's work in you, and to rob you of the blessing you will obtain, if you persevere.

5. *Determine to make the retreat well, so far as depends on yourself.* Follow its rules exactly—the silence, the meditations, the prayers. Try resolutely to put away all thoughts that do not belong to the retreat. Read only what may help you. Ask the advice of the priest who is directing your retreat about this. Be open and honest in all your dealings with him.

6. *Think of this retreat as if it might be a preparation for death.* You may never have an opportunity of making another. If you knew this to be the case, how earnestly you would try to make it well; to set right anything in your past life that troubles your conscience; to be honest and sincere with yourself and with God; to give yourself wholly to Him.

What you would wish to have done when you come to die, resolve to do now.

Imitation of Christ, I. xx.

THE END OF MAN

'MAN was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.'

I. GOD IS MY CREATOR

I, who have come here into retreat in order that I may know what God would have me to do, and through His grace may once more put myself into the right relation to Him—I was created by God. I did not come into being by chance, or the will of my parents, except as the instruments of God's will and purpose, still less by my own will; but by the will of God. My body was fashioned by God in my mother's womb, my soul created, brought into being out of nothing, and infused into my body.

Moreover I am utterly dependent upon God. Every moment He upholds me in being, gives me life, the use of reason and free will, all the faculties and powers of my body, mind, and soul. I cannot use any of these powers without His concurrence.

Thus let me think of what it is to be a creature. I come from God. I am the work of His hands. Therefore I belong to Him, and am every moment dependent upon Him.

Now let me consider some circumstances of my creation.

1. *God created me out of pure love.* He had no need of me, as though without me He lacked anything. God was not a solitary unit so as to need me or any other creature for companionship. He was infinitely blessed and happy in the mutual knowledge and love of the three eternal Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In God Himself was the fullness of all knowledge, love, and life. I could add nothing to it. Creation is a mystery we cannot fathom. We can only dimly think of it as the eternal love of God overflowing beyond His own Being, and desiring to create other beings who might share His love and bliss, and might love Him in return.

2. *The decree of my creation was from everlasting.* From all eternity God thought of me, and purposed to bring me

in due time into being. I was nothing, yet I had a place in the thoughts and heart of the eternal God. He loved me, and had His purpose for me.

3. *God created me with a special, individual love and purpose*, endowing me with all that makes up my own individual constitution, temperament, capacities. He must have foreseen in me some special thing upon which His love rested; some capacity to make a return of love to Him, which no other among His creatures could make; some particular work for me to do for Him, which only I could do; some place for me to fill in His plan, which only I could fill. And if I refuse or fail, He must create another to take the place which I have forfeited.

4. And not only has God called me into being: *He has also raised me to the supernatural state*, making me His child by adoption and grace, that I may partake of His own life, and hereafter share His eternal happiness and glory. And this too He purposed from eternity (*Eph.* i. 4–6).

II. My Response to God

God, because He has created me, cannot be indifferent to the use I make of the life and faculties He has given me. He must look for some response from me, which shall be worthy of Himself, and worthy also of the nature He has given me, and the state of grace to which He has raised me. What ought my response to be?

'Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord.' This is the response I am to make to my Creator.

1. *I am to praise God:—*

In word, by the utterance of praise in the public services of the Church, and in private devotion.

In heart, by loving Him in all things and above all things; surrendering myself wholly to Him in filial love and dependence; ready to receive at His hands whatever He may appoint for me, and to confess that He is good, in adversity no less than in prosperity.

In act, by seeking in all things to promote His honour and glory.

2. *To reverence Him.* Reverence is both internal and external. Internal reverence includes a profound sense and acknowledgement of God's majesty and my own nothingness, a constant recognition of His presence, and that holy fear which is a gift of the Holy Ghost.

External reverence is the outward expression of that which is internal. It should manifest itself in respect for all the ordinances of religion, and in the care with which I take part in them ; in boldly confessing my faith before men ; in humility and modesty in all my behaviour.

3. *To serve Him*, i.e. always and in all things to do His will and not my own. And this service which I owe to God includes : (1) keeping His commandments ; (2) fulfilling the duties of my state and calling in life ; (3) the ordering of my life, not according to my own wayward impulses, but according to His will ; (4) if I am not yet fixed in a state of life and am at liberty to make a choice, a serious deliberation as to what He would have me choose.

The service of God may indeed at times be difficult to nature, but it is always in my power aided by the grace of God. What peace and security this should give me ! God does not require that I should succeed in what I try to do in obedience to His will ; but only my good will, my faithful attempt to do the best I can. And that good will He is always ready to give me in answer to prayer. If success were to be the measure of my service, I might often despair. But God does not measure my service by my success. If I have done what I could, that is the service He requires. I have fulfilled my end—my immediate end, my duty to God in this present life.

III. The Salvation of my Soul

This is my ultimate end, my end in the life to come. What is there I can put in comparison with it ? What other object in life can have any value for me if I do not save my soul ? ' What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? ' (*S. Mark* viii. 36, 37).

Salvation, think what it means ! Not merely to escape

hell, though that were worth every effort and sacrifice; but to be set free from all sin and possibility of ever sinning again; to be made perfect, capable of companionship with saints and angels, and with God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to enter into every possible kind of happiness and joy of which a sinless and perfect human nature is capable, ever advancing in the knowledge and love of God. And all this for ever, without satiety, and without possibility of loss or diminution.

Dwell on this; and then consider that there is a necessary connection between these two things, the praise, reverence, and service of God and the salvation of my soul. If I serve Him now, I shall save my soul: I shall lose it for ever if I live for self and for the world. Let me see to it, then, that I am bringing to the service of God my whole heart.

And as the service of God is the necessary condition of my salvation, so is it also the only thing that can make me happy even in this life.

Fallen man loves to be his own master, to be independent, to act according to his own will. Here is the source of all his misery. He seeks himself, and is unhappy. He pursues his own ends, and is restless and unsatisfied. He indulges his passions, and becomes their slave (*S. John* viii. 34). On the other hand, to serve God is to enjoy peace and freedom. It is to win the victory over self, the world, and the devil; to be superior to all creatures; to have no other master but God, '*cui servire regnare est.*'

O my God, I am not my own, but Thine. I come from Thee. I belong to Thee. I depend upon Thee for everything. Thou art the Eternal Love, and desirest the response of my poor love. Help me to know Thee better, to love Thee more, to serve Thee truly in this life, and hereafter to be with Thee for ever in the joy of heaven.

Imitation of Christ, III. ix; x.

THE END AND RIGHT USE OF CREATURES

After speaking of the end of man, S. Ignatius goes on to say, ' The other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and to aid him in the pursuit of the end for which he was created.'

I. The End of Creatures

By creatures, ' the other things on the face of the earth,' S. Ignatius means not only the various objects of this visible world, but also all events, circumstances, states and conditions of life—all, whether in the order of nature or of grace, that influences my bodily, mental, or spiritual life, e.g. wealth or poverty, health or sickness, honour or dishonour, a long life or a short one, the place in which I live, the work I do, the persons I meet, the books I read, the advantages or disadvantages, whether temporal or spiritual, of my state and condition in life—all these may be said to be creatures of God because He ordains or permits them. And He does so for my sake, and to aid me in the pursuit of the end for which I was created, viz. to praise, reverence, and serve Him, and by this means to save my soul.

Even those things, circumstances, persons, events, which cause me sorrow or pain, or seem to be adverse and harmful, may help me. They are intended by God for my trial and discipline. They are to help me to practise mortification, submission, patience, courage, and other virtues. If I am poor, poverty accepted for Christ's sake is full of blessing ; while riches might be full of danger. If I have bad health, it may draw me very close to God. If I am wronged or injured, that may make me more like to Christ. If I have a quick temper, or any other besetting temptation, the struggle to overcome it will develop the opposite virtue.

With the exception of sin, there is nothing within me or around me, nothing that happens to me, that may not be used for the glory of God, and the sanctification and

salvation of my soul. ' All things work together for good to them that love God ' (*Rom.* viii. 28).

It will be helpful constantly to remember this truth and apply it to the common occurrences of everyday life : the state of the weather, variations in our health and spirits, interruptions, disappointments, the behaviour of others towards us, some unexpected pleasure, a piece of good fortune, as we say—all these are creatures of God in S. Ignatius' use of the word. They are not mere accidents, nor the results of unintelligent forces acting according to blind laws ; the good providence of God is behind them, ordering or overruling all for our ultimate good.

II. The Right Use of Creatures

Having spoken of the end of creatures, S. Ignatius goes on to draw the following conclusion : that we ' ought to make use of creatures just so far as they help us to attain our end, and to abstain, or withdraw ourselves, from them just so far as they hinder us.'

If all creatures have been made for man's sake, and to help him in the attainment of his end, it is plain that the principle which ought to guide me in using them or refraining from them, is to be found in the answer to the question, Are they a help towards my end or not ? And if I find that any of them are a help towards this end, I ought to make use of them just so far as they are helpful ; or if they are a hindrance, to abstain from or renounce them just so far as they hinder. For creatures are only means, not ends ; and in the use of means the only thing a sensible man considers is whether, and how far, they help towards the end he has in view.

This principle applies to everything, and if I examine my life and actions in the light of it I shall discover manifold disorders in my conduct. I so often forget or ignore the true order, and put the means in place of the end. I consult only my own tastes and desires, my likes or dislikes, and act accordingly. Hence comes a want of due order in my life, which leads to many sins, sometimes venial, sometimes mortal. The mere fact that a thing or a line of action is pleasant or the reverse, is no true reason for embracing it or rejecting it. That which is pleasant may be an

obstacle to my true end; that from which I shrink may be the very thing, perhaps the only thing, that will help me to attain it.

The only right and reasonable way, then, to use creatures, is to ask myself at every turn: 'Will this help me to serve God and save my soul, or will it hinder me?' and to make up my mind to use everything or put it aside just so far as it helps or hinders.

This must be the test for everything. Not 'What do I like? What would be pleasant, or easy, or would bring me present gain?' but simply, 'What will help me to serve God? What does God want me to do about this? What will best contribute to His glory, and the salvation of my soul?'

It is a question I should ask in every choice I have to make, whether in great matters like the question of my vocation, or in lesser everyday matters; in the use of any of God's gifts of mind, body, or estate; in the occurrence of any pain, loss, sorrow, or disappointment. 'How can I best use any of these things so as to glorify God, and help forward the sanctification and salvation of my soul?'

III. Indifference

If I am to be able to use creatures rightly, i.e. to use them or abstain from them only according as, and so far as, they help or hinder me in the service of God and the salvation of my soul, I must 'make myself indifferent' in regard to them.

By 'indifference' S. Ignatius does not mean apathy or insensibility. I am not required so to beat down and kill my nature that I do not feel desire for pleasant things, and repugnance to painful ones; but I am not to let these natural feelings determine my choice or my conduct. These must be determined always in accordance with the foundation truths of my own end, and the end of creatures.

Indifference means practically that I am to be as ready to receive one thing as another at the hand of God; ready to accept whatever circumstances He may place me in, because He knows best what will help and what will hinder me in the attainment of the end for which He created me. If He gives me health, I will thank Him for it, and use it in

His service; if sickness, I will accept it willingly, knowing that it will best help me to glorify Him, and save my soul. So with all other things, wealth or poverty, honour or obscurity, a long life or a short one, etc. To all these things I must 'make myself indifferent,' i.e. I must look upon them only as means to the end, the glory and service of God and the salvation of my soul; and therefore as things to be desired or rejected only so far as they serve that end. Riches, honour, health, a long life, may no doubt be used for the glory of God and my salvation; but they may also, by misuse, turn to my ruin and damnation. Many have attained to holiness and salvation by the way of poverty, obscurity, or sickness, or by a premature death have been removed from temptations which might have proved fatal. For myself, therefore, who am so utterly ignorant which of these many different paths may be for me the way of salvation, it is my duty and my wisdom to be indifferent; to have no wish but to follow the path which God marks out for me; and to hold it for certain that whatever He appoints for me will be, for me, the best and surest means of rendering to Him, in the highest, and it may be even in an heroic, measure, that love and service which is my duty and my true happiness in this life, and will best secure the salvation of my soul.

N.B.—It is not necessary at this point of the retreat to know what God's will for you is: it is enough that you should be firmly resolved to follow it when, in the course of the retreat, you come to know it.

Imitation of Christ, III. xvi, xvii, xxxi.

THE TRIPLE SIN

If bodily death followed instantly upon the commission of a mortal sin, we should have no doubt about its serious character. But we sin and nothing visible follows. Spiritual death strikes the soul, but we cannot see it, for the soul is invisible ; nor can we now experience its full effects, which will be made manifest when we pass into eternity. Therefore, to bring home to us the deadly character of sin and its awful consequences, S. Ignatius would have us meditate upon some others who sinned mortally, and see the terrible ruin which overtook them.

Prel. i. Think of the rebel angels cast down from heaven ; and then of Adam driven forth from Eden and the presence of God.

Prel. ii. Pray for shame and holy fear, seeing how often you have deserved to be condemned eternally for your many sins.

I. The Sin of the Angels

The angels were created for the same end as man, viz. 'to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord,' and by so doing to be established for ever in an eternity of bliss.

For the attainment of this end they were created in heaven itself and endowed with wondrous gifts both of nature and of grace. But a number of them were untrue to their end. They refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. They made themselves their own end, chose to be independent and to use their great gifts for their own glory. Thus they sinned by pride and rebellion.

What was the result ? For that one sin, committed in a moment of time, they were cast down from heaven : all their glory was changed into shame ; their happiness into misery ; and instead of eternal life and glory they incurred spiritual death and ruin, everlasting separation from God, and the never-ending torments of hell.

Here, then, I see the result of sin. I do not see it in my own soul, but I see it in the fallen angels ; and I ask myself, if their one sin was so terribly punished, what an awful thing sin must be, and what ought I to think of my

many sins, mortal sins, committed not once or twice only, but time after time? And yet God has spared me, been patient with me, day after day, perhaps through many years of sin.

O my God, what if my next mortal sin should be the filling up of the measure of my iniquity! What if it should be the last time Thou wilt allow me to outrage Thy holiness, Thy justice, Thy forbearance, and Thy mercy!

II. The Sin of Adam

Perhaps I am tempted to think that the sin of the angels, though it was but a single one, was immeasurably greater than my many sins, because of the perfection of their nature, and the fact that they sinned in heaven and without the solicitation of any external tempter. Therefore S. Ignatius bids me meditate on another sin more like my own, because committed by one with the same human nature as myself—the sin of Adam.

He too, like the angels, was created 'to praise, reverence, and serve God,' and by so doing to attain eternal bliss in heaven. But he turned away from his duty to God to seek satisfaction in the creature. Eve, tempted by the devil, tempted Adam. The creature whom God had given to be his helper became his ruin, because he chose to cleave to her rather than to obey God.

See the result of his sin. That act of disobedience brought death as its consequence—death both natural and spiritual. His soul died at once, for it lost the grace of God which was its life. His body also came under the dominion of disease, decay, and death. It also vitiated his whole nature, opening up within it the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, that threefold concupiscence which has worked in the human race ever since.

And in this sin and its consequences I am personally involved. If the sin was first Adam's, I have made it my own by repeated acts of my own will, choosing creatures, and the satisfaction of my own lusts, rather than God.

What, then, must be the state of my soul? If I could see it, I should behold a corruption worse than that of a decaying corpse. And what must be the punishment due

to me for my many sins, sins committed after baptism, in a body and soul redeemed by the Blood of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Ghost—sins committed times out of number, in the face of our Lord's teaching about the love of God and the pains of hell ; sins for which I have had so little penitence, which perhaps I have never yet repented of at all ?

III. The Sin of a Lost Soul

Do I try to extenuate my guilt with the thought that though Adam's sin was but one, yet it was more culpable than all my sins because committed in the state of unfallen nature ? S. Ignatius will not let me rely on any such plea. He bids me consider a sin exactly parallel with my own—a sin committed by some soul since the Fall.

Among the 100,000, more or less, who have died during the last twenty-four hours, there may be some one who was overtaken by death in the very act of committing a mortal sin—a sin which, knowing it to be mortal, he deliberately and wilfully committed.

Let me think of such a one—the soul of one of my own age, who had lived in circumstances much the same as mine. And now that soul is lost, a prey for ever to the quenchless fire and the undying worm.

What, then, of myself ? Have I ever committed a deliberate mortal sin ? If so I have deserved hell. And it may be that I have committed many such sins, perhaps formed some habit of mortal sin, and cannot count the number of times I have committed it. What, then, do I deserve for all these multiplied sins ?

And yet in spite of all God has borne with me, has preserved my life, gives me still the possibility of recovery, the opportunity of this retreat in which I may return to Him in penitence, and receive once more His pardoning and restoring grace.

But what if this should be the last opportunity He will give me ! What if the next time I commit a deliberate mortal sin, God should not give me time or grace to repent, and with the guilt of that sin upon my soul I should die, and be lost for ever !—lost when I might so easily have been saved ; when God wanted to save me, and therefore

has spared me till now, and offers me still the grace of penitence and absolution !

Kneeling, then, at the foot of the Cross, and contemplating Him who hangs thereon, the eternal Son of God, who came down from heaven and was made man that He might offer Himself a sacrifice for my sins, I will ask myself those moving questions which S. Ignatius suggests : What have I done for Christ my Saviour hitherto, nay, what have I not done against Him ? What am I doing for Him now ? What ought I to do for the future ? Lord, I am confounded when I think of all that Thou hast done for me, and the return that I have made to Thee. Give me now, at last, a holy fear of sin, true penitence for all that is past, and an earnest purpose never to offend Thee again by any wilful sin.

Imitation of Christ, III. iv, viii, lii.

MY OWN SINS

PREL. i. Myself as a criminal about to appear before my Judge.

Prel. ii. Lord, give me courage to face my sins now, and grace to be truly contrite for them.

I. A REVIEW OF THE SINS OF MY WHOLE LIFE

To help myself to make this review I will divide my life into periods, childhood, school days, etc., according to any marked divisions in it. I will think too of the various places in which I have lived, the companions with whom I have been associated, the occupations in which I have been engaged.

1. *In childhood.* What do my earliest memories reveal of my thoughts when alone, my words, my actions?

2. *In youth.* I will recall the sins committed in the various places where I have lived, home, school, college; by day or by night; alone or with others; the books I used to read; my secret thoughts; my prayers or my neglect of them; my confirmation; my communions; my whole attitude towards God and religion.

3. *In later life.* Before marriage; after marriage. My work; amusements; relations with others, superiors, equals, inferiors; my duty to God; my worship and service of Him; my duty towards my neighbour.

As I look back over my life where do I not find memories of sin—multitudes, multitudes, more in number than the hairs of my head? If I think of God's commandments, which of them have I not broken? If I examine my bodily senses and powers, with which of them have I not sinned—sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, my hands, my feet, my tongue? Or the powers of my soul, memory, understanding, imagination, affections, will?

Lord, show me what I have been, what I have made of myself, the long tale of my sins through so many days and months and years.

II. The Foulness, Ingratitude, and Folly of my Sins

1. *Their foulness.* What a hideous sight! A moral leprosy, more horrible than any disease of the body! Let me think of my soul in its first baptismal purity, and now so defiled with sins of every kind: of my body so degraded by sensual indulgence.

2. *Their ingratitude.* I owe everything to God, all that I am and have: the faculties of my soul and body, the creatures He has given me for my sustenance and my use, and I have used them so often to sin against Him. He created me, and moment by moment He upholds me in being. If He were to withdraw His sustaining power, I should fall back into the nothingness from whence I came. If He took away my reason, I should become more helpless than the brutes. If He deprived me of sight, or hearing, or speech, or the power of movement, how could I wonder, seeing how I have used all these to sin against Him times out of number!

How great has been my ingratitude! I owe all I am and have to God, yet I have turned my back upon Him, said to Him 'Depart from me, leave me to myself, to go my own way, to seek my own gratification, to indulge my passions freely without constraint, without the thought of Thee, who for my sins didst bear the shame and suffering of the Cross.' My sins: Thy Cross! Thy many gifts: my manifold misuse of them! Thy forbearance: my obstinate continuance in sin!

I have despised and rejected Thy love, presumed upon Thy forbearance. I have given scandal and been the cause of sin in others, perhaps been directly their tempter, doing the work of the devil himself.

3. *Their folly.* I have forsaken Thee, my Father, my Saviour, my chief good, and for what? For slavery to the devil, for the hard bondage of sin, for the tyranny of my own lusts and passions. And what has been the result? What have I found but misery, unrest, remorse? 'My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water' (*Jer.* ii. 13). My

soul is dried up with thirst, and yet all the time I might have been drinking of Thee, the 'Living Water.'

O my God, if I had treated a fellow man as I have treated Thee, should I not be overwhelmed with shame? How could I forgive myself? And yet, when it is Thou, the Supreme Good, my God and Saviour, against whom I have sinned, I have but little sorrow, or none at all. Even if I have at times made some sort of repentance and confession, how often it has been formal, heartless, without contrition and without amendment.

III. What am I who have thus Dared to Sin Against God?

What am I in comparison with the angels who fell? Yet if God spared not them, let me take heed lest He spare not me, so far below them in my feeble nature.

1. *My body.* How poor and frail a thing, formed out of the dust of the earth, and soon to return to dust again! How quickly its strength and beauty pass away! What will it be a few days after death but a mass of corruption!

2. *My soul.* What have I made of it by my sins? If I could see it as God sees it, I should know that it is more loathsome than a corpse. The corruption of my body in death is only a faint image of the corruption of my soul through sin.

3. *My whole life.* What is it but a little breath which will quickly pass away! 'Behold, Thou hast made my days as it were a span long; and mine age is nothing in respect of Thee; and verily every man living is altogether vanity' (*Ps.* xxxix. 6).

And then after considering what I am who have thus dared to sin, let me consider the greatness of God against whom I have sinned, comparing His attributes one by one with my own littleness and misery: His sovereign power with my weakness; His wisdom with my ignorance and folly; His holiness with my sinfulness; His goodness with my perversity. What audacity, what ingratitude, what wickedness, what folly in all my sins!

Let me try to bring all this home to myself. The more I know of my own misery and of God's goodness, the better shall I be disposed for that shame and contrition which are to be the fruit of this meditation.

O my God, I thank Thee that Thou hast spared me hitherto, and given me the desire and the time for repentance. Give me such true inward sorrow for my sins as shall bear fruit in real amendment of life. Henceforth I desire to devote myself wholly to Thee and to Thy service. 'The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise' (*Ps.* li. 17).

Imitation of Christ, III. viii, lii.

ETERNITY

PREL. i. It has been calculated that in every twenty-four hours some 100,000 souls pass from time into eternity. Some day that experience will be yours. It will be wise to think of it now.

Prel. ii. Pray that you may have a profound sense of the shortness of time and the unending duration of eternity.

I. WHAT IS ETERNITY?

Eternity is an essential property of the Being of God. Time is one of His creatures. I exist now in time, but God has attached to my being something of His own property of eternity. Once I was not. Now I exist, and shall exist for ever. Reason points to the immortality of my soul. Revelation assures me of the resurrection of my body, and of the eternity of my whole being, body and soul together. 'I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.'

Eternity, the life everlasting, what is it? It is beyond the comprehension of the human mind. I can only think of it in that negative way in which I am forced to think of infinity, as time which has no limit, as duration without end. Whatever vast tracts of time I may imagine, I shall still be no nearer to the measurement of eternity, for eternity has no measure. If once in a million years a little bird were to carry away in its beak a grain of sand from the desert or a drop of water from the ocean, how many millions and millions of years must pass away before the sand was all removed or the ocean emptied! Yet after all those millions of years eternity would be no nearer an end. Thought or imagination may go on adding year after year, age after age, to eternity, yet its duration is not augmented. In that boundless course of eternity there are no limits of time. Some day it will be said of me, he has passed into eternity, but it shall never be said that I have passed the third, the fourth, the hundredth, nay the millionth part of my eternity. For eternity has no parts. It will ever be as long for me as on the day when I passed from this life of time and entered upon it.

Duration without end—that is eternity, so far as we can form any mental picture of it.

And in this endless duration nothing changes. Change and succession are conditions of our present life in time. In eternity all is permanent. The happiness of heaven will know neither failure nor satiety; the misery of hell will never find any alleviation. In heaven each moment of joy will add to all the rest; in hell each moment of misery will bear the weight of all the ages of eternity.

II. What shall be my State in Eternity?

As in this world each one of us is living in union with Christ through sanctifying grace, or apart from Him in sin; so in eternity I shall be for ever with God, beholding His beauty, sharing His bliss, rejoicing in His love; or for ever separated from Him, in the outer darkness, a prey to the undying worm of conscience and the fire which never shall be quenched.

Which of these destinies will be mine? I know not for certain. It depends upon my use or misuse of the grace God gives me. But this I do know, that at any moment there is but a step between time and eternity. A rush of blood to the brain, a failure of the heart, an accident in the street, or on a journey by land or sea, and I shall be in eternity.

'O Eternity,' exclaims S. Augustine, 'whosoever meditates upon thee without reforming his life, has either no faith or no heart.'

III. On what does my Eternity Depend?

1. *My eternity depends upon my present life.* 'Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting' (*Gal.* vi. 7, 8). My actions, words, and thoughts persist beyond the short span of my earthly life. They drop into the stream of time, as leaves fall into a river. They disappear and are forgotten; but I shall find them again in eternity, and they will remain inseparably united to me for ever. A thought which I entertain, a word I speak,

an act which lasts but a moment—all these, flowing into the ocean of eternity, become permanent and immutable as eternity itself. In one moment I do that which eternity cannot undo. I yield to temptation: it is an eternal fact. The enjoyment of the sin passes away in a moment, but the guilt, unless I am set free from it by penitence, will for all eternity be attached to my soul as a part of that undying worm of remorse which shall torment me for ever. On the other hand, each act of resistance to temptation, of charity, of duty done for God, will obtain for me an eternal joy and reward, if I persevere in grace to the end.

I am therefore the master of my own destiny. It depends on my present life, and that depends, with the grace of God, on my own will.

2. *My eternity depends upon my very short life.* How short is life, even at its longest! When I was young a year seemed a very long time. Now, how quickly it is gone! But suppose I should live to old age, what is the longest life compared to eternity? How shall I view it when I shall have passed into eternity? What a brief moment it will seem then! It is now in reality what it will then appear. So brief, so transitory, that I should scarcely remember it, were it not that eternity itself will remind me that in that brief space of time I decided my lot for ever.

3. *My eternity may depend upon the use I make of this retreat.* Light shines and disappears. God comes near and retires. He speaks and remains silent. Grace is offered and withdrawn if not accepted and used. Grace used attracts fresh grace. One moment of grace well used may be the turning-point of a life. It may lead on to a whole chain of other graces, to final perseverance, to an immense happiness, to eternal glory. On the other hand, one moment of grace spurned or neglected may forfeit all the rest that God had prepared to give me; may be the beginning of a downward course which will end in final rejection of God and separation from Him for ever in hell.

O my God, as I think of eternity, how trifling ought to appear to me the transitory things of time and sense!

Yet what power they still have to elate or depress me, to stir my passions, to confuse my understanding, to enslave my heart. O my God, help me to let go the things of earth, and fix my heart on heaven, where alone with Thee true joys are to be found.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxiii, xxiv.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

PREL. i. S. Luke xv. 11–24.

Prel. ii. The prodigal returning to his father after long absence in a far country.

Prel. iii. Ask for the grace of true penitence, that, like the prodigal, you may obtain pardon for the past, and the joy of restoration to your Father's home.

I. THE PRODIGAL'S AWAKENING

'He came to himself.' This is the first step in recovery. He enters into his own heart. He sees what he is, and from whence he has fallen. He thinks again of his father and his old home, and contrasts it with his present misery. 'O my home where I might have been so happy! Home of my innocence and all that was good, where everything was provided for me . . . and now my hunger, my rags, these swine whom I have to feed, and with whom I live!' What a contrast! 'How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!'

Thus grace prepares for the return of the wandering soul. It lights up the conscience of the sinner, and reveals him to himself. It shows him all his misery and ruin. It compels him to think of the state from which he has fallen—of the happiness, the innocence, the peace he once enjoyed. So it awakens in him the desire to return to God whom he has forsaken.

It is a picture of myself. I am that prodigal. What graces and spiritual gifts have I not wasted! How far away I am, or have been, from God! To what hard masters have I become a slave, while giving way to my self-will and my passions! Instead of dwelling in God's Church as my home, being fed with the Bread of angels, and enjoying the happiness and peace of a pure and holy life, I have sought, like the prodigal, to satisfy myself with husks fit only for the food of swine. But thanks be to God, my retreat calls me back to my better self; makes me feel that sin is not my true nature; awakens in me the desire to come back to God.

II. His Return

The prodigal did not delay to act upon the good thoughts that came to him. He said, 'I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.'

'And he arose and came.' He does not stop at words and wishes only. He does not put off his return to a 'more convenient season.' Now, at once, while grace knocks at the door of his heart and the good desire stirs within him, he will act upon it. He is not afraid of the talk and sneers of others at his repentance. He does not refuse to own the very worst about himself, and take upon himself the shame of confessing all. He looks beyond all that to the joy of return. 'He arose, and came.'

'To his father.' This is the ground of all his confidence; the foundation of all his hope. He knows that he has been unloving, ungrateful, selfish beyond measure. But he will throw himself at his father's feet, not attempting to justify himself, trusting only to a father's love. He will not dare to claim the rights of a son. Of these he confesses himself no longer worthy: it will be enough if he is received back as one of the hired servants.

Wonderful union of confidence and humility! This is the character of true penitence. It does not give way to discouragement and cowardice, but rather takes courage and dares to trust the infinite love and mercy of God, while at the same time it humbles itself in full confession of its sin.

So let it be with me. I too will arise and go to my Father. I will kneel at the feet of His priest and make my humble confession. I will hide nothing, whatever pain and shame it may cost me to acknowledge it. If I have been a shameless sinner, I will not be a cowardly penitent. I will think of the joy which awaits me after I have borne the pain.

III. His Welcome

How different is his reception from what he might well have feared! While he is yet a great way off his father sees him, runs to meet him, and embraces him. The prodigal begins to say what he had prepared, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' There he stops. In the welcome of his father's embrace it seems unreal now to ask for a servant's place. He feels that he has already been received back as a son. There is no reproach for the past, no time of trial set before forgiveness: immediately he is restored to his place as a son. 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'

This is our Lord's picture of what takes place in the restoration of each penitent soul. 'The best robe,' the white robe of baptismal purity and grace, lost by sin, restored by Absolution; the ring, the sign that the penitent is reunited to Christ as His bride; the shoes, the symbol of readiness in God's service: 'I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast set my heart at liberty' (*Ps.* cxix. 32); and the feast, the Blessed Sacrament; and the companionship of all in the Father's house, the company of angels and saints with whom we have fellowship in the Church, the communion of saints—no longer 'strangers and outcasts' as we were in our sins, 'but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God' (*Eph.* ii. 19). And then the joy, the joy of heaven, the joy of God, in our recovery. 'It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found'—'was dead,' for the soul in sin is dead to God; 'was lost' when seeking self; now, losing self, is found in God.

So think of God's welcome of each returning penitent. And if you have in any way gone away from God, in the loss of your first love or in any form of sin, remember now the old days when you lived near to God, and enjoyed all

the riches of His grace. Think, too, of His patient yearning love for all His children ; how surely He will meet and welcome your return ; how easy He will make it ; what joy it will give to Him, what joy to all the hosts of heaven.

Resolve, then, to come back to God as a penitent, and at once. And pray that having come back as a true penitent you may never more go astray in ways of wilful sin, but may abide for ever in your Father's home.

Imitation of Christ, I. xxii ; III. xx, liii.

VOCATION

You have meditated on God's welcome of the returning penitent, and now, forgiven and restored, you are ready to ask, as S. Paul at his conversion asked, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' It is for the answer to this question that you must be listening in the meditations that are to follow. In them our Lord will doubtless make known to you the vocation which is His will for you. But first, by way of preparation, it will be helpful to consider the subject of vocation generally. Think (1) of God calling you out of nothingness into being — that was His first vocation, and the ground of all that follows; (2) of His calling you to be a Christian; (3) of His calling you to some special place and work in His Church.

Prel. i. Our Lord calling His first disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John. At His call they leave their nets and the ship and follow Him (*S. Matt.* iv. 18–22).

Prel. ii. Pray for light to know what God's vocation for you is, and for grace to follow it.

I. My Creation

My creation was God's first vocation. He called me out of nothingness into being.

Vocation is no sudden impulse breaking in upon a soul's life, no plan suddenly made and put before a soul for instant adoption, no new purpose unrelated to all that has gone before. It has its roots far back in the fact of my creation. From all eternity God thought of me, and had His purpose for me.

In due time He called me out of nothingness—fashioned my body out of existing elements, and infused into it my soul. He has given me just that combination of gifts and powers which best fit me for the purpose He has in view for me.

And because God is infinitely good and wise, His purpose must be both wise and loving. He could not create anything aimlessly or without a good and loving purpose. He loves me better than I love myself. My love for myself is very blind. I know so little of my own capacities and

limitations that I often long for things which are inconsistent with my real good. But God loves me with a love which makes no mistakes and never fails, a love which is personal and individual, and longs that I should fulfil the purpose for which He called me into being, and in fulfilling it find my real good and eternal happiness.

And He will guide me safely onwards in the way of my vocation, if day by day I try to order my life, not according to my own fancy and wayward impulses, but according to His will. How confidently I may trust myself to His good providence, and watchful care! Do with me what Thou wilt, O Lord, for I know that Thou lovest me.

II. My Vocation to be a Christian

This too was from all eternity. God chose me in Christ 'before the foundation of the world' (*Eph.* i. 4). This choice was sealed to me at my baptism, 'wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.'

By this second vocation God called me 'out of darkness into His marvellous light' (1 *S. Pet.* ii. 9); from the power of Satan 'into the kingdom of His dear Son' (*Col.* i. 13); made me a 'partaker of the divine nature' (2 *S. Pet.* i. 4); 'accepted in the Beloved' (*Eph.* i. 6); no longer a stranger and alien, but a 'fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God' (*Eph.* ii. 19).

How many millions have not received this vocation to the new life in Christ, but God has given it to me! I know not why. Not for any merit of my own, but in the free choice of His predestinating love (*Eph.* i. 5).

This predestination, and the vocation in which it issued, is a predestination to 'adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself' (*Eph.* i. 4–6, R.V.). It does not mean that I shall certainly be saved in the end. That depends upon my obedience and perseverance. I have been chosen and placed by God in a 'state of salvation,' but I must, by God's grace, 'continue in' it 'to my life's end.' I must 'give diligence to make' my 'calling and election sure' (2 *S. Pet.* i. 10).

And this predestination and vocation to the Christian

life carries with it responsibilities towards others. The Church has received the command to preach the Gospel to every nation. A share in this responsibility rests on me. I must bear witness to the truth of Christ, and do what I can to extend His kingdom and grace to others. I can do this by prayer, alms, good example, personal service in some form or other, as God may give me opportunity.

My God, let me not forget nor be neglectful of these responsibilities, lest I forfeit the grace to which in Thy eternal love Thou hast called me in Christ Jesus.

III. My Special Vocation in the Church

Within this vocation to the Christian Church there is my own special vocation. The word ' vocation ' is often unduly restricted, as if it applied only to the priesthood or to the religious life. But God has a special vocation for every one, and the happiness and fruitfulness, perhaps also the salvation, of each soul depends upon recognizing this vocation and following it.

In order to know what my special vocation is, I must :—

1. *Believe that God has His purpose for me*, and will make it known to me if I want to know it, and will ask Him. He may make it known in various ways, partly through circumstances and His providential guiding of my life, partly through the inward drawings of His grace, partly by means of others. A spiritual guide may recognize the call before it is clearly known to the soul itself. ' Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child ' (1 *Sam.* iii. 8).

2. *I must have a listening and attentive ear*, watching for indications of God's will, not drifting on in a careless, aimless way, catching just at the moment's pleasure, without serious thought about the future.

3. *Moral purity.* The heart that wants to hear God's call must be right with Him ; not indeed free from all sin, or who could ever hope to hear His voice ? but free from all deliberate and cherished sin. There must therefore be penitence, and the desire and honest effort to rise out of all known and wilful sin.

4. *I must be doing my present duty where I am.* God's call is one and continuous, but it is revealed bit by bit. It is only while I am responding to each step of the call that I can hear and recognize the next. If I am not making the best use of my time and opportunities now, I may make myself unfit for some high vocation which God would otherwise have given me.

5. *I must pray often that God will make His will known to me,* and that I may not be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

Examine yourself (1) whether you are living true to the purpose for which God created you, calling you out of nothingness into being; (2) whether you are walking worthy of your vocation to the Christian life, and doing anything to extend to others the grace you have received; (3) whether God has called you to your present state and condition of life, or is calling you to some other; (4) whether you are praying to know His will, and are ready to obey it. 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' (*Acts* ix. 6). 'Speak, for Thy servant heareth' (1 *Sam.* iii. 10).

Imitation of Christ, III, i, ii.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

This is a very important meditation. It is intended, S. Ignatius says, to help us to meditate with fruit and success on the life of Christ. It will help us to do this, because it will inspire us with a generous desire and purpose of following Him, as our King, with the utmost possible loyalty and devotion; and this is just the disposition of mind and will which we are to carry with us into all the subsequent meditations on His life and passion. We are to consider in all of them what our Lord chose for Himself as the most perfect way of glorifying His Father, and what He would have us choose, in order that we may follow Him most closely, in whatever kind or state of life He may call each one of us to serve Him.

Prel. i. Christ our Lord, the Captain of our salvation, calling all men to follow Him in His warfare against sin, the world, and the devil.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace not to be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to obey.

I. A Similitude

S. Ignatius asks us to imagine an earthly king calling his subjects to follow him in some great and glorious enterprise. Though human, he is divinely called and appointed by God. He attracts by his person and character, and inspires confidence in every heart. His enterprise is most noble. Success is certain. He has a divine promise of victory.

Yet there are sufferings and labours to be endured. Those who accept his call and follow must be ready to bear manifold toils and privations. They must quit themselves like men. They must overcome their fears and sloth. They must train themselves in all the exercises of warfare. Above all they must be resolved never to turn back. So long as they follow their leader they will be safe. They may be wounded, but their king is able to heal every wound received in his service.

Moreover he will himself go before them, bearing the brunt of every toil and danger. No one among his soldiers

will have anything to do or to suffer that he has not done and suffered first. And as reward, he promises to all who accept his call a share in his kingdom, when the warfare is over—a share proportionate to the toils and sufferings each has endured.

II. The Reality

There is such a King, Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation (*Heb.* ii. 10).

Think of Him as if He were standing before you, and asking you to follow Him. It is not an earthly but a spiritual warfare to which He calls you. It is to wage war against sin, the world, and the devil. It is to help Him to extend and establish His kingdom in the world. Not an earthly kingdom of a merely human Christ, such as the world might acknowledge and applaud. Not a kingdom consisting merely in improved social and economic conditions, though these have a subordinate place in it. Not a kingdom of nominal subjects, Christians only in name and outward profession. But a supernatural kingdom of grace and righteousness and truth in the hearts of men, a kingdom of souls rescued from sin and Satan, brought out of darkness into light.

This is the purpose for which our Lord calls you. But if you desire to accept His call and help Him, you must first establish His kingdom in your own heart. You must conquer yourself, your pride, your self-will, your self-love, your sensuality, your sloth. You must labour, with the help of grace, to destroy in yourself every sinful affection, to banish every temper contrary to the spirit of Jesus. Unless you try to do this you cannot really work for the extension of Christ's kingdom, or hope to win others to His obedience. His kingdom is indeed a kingdom of freedom, joy, and peace; but you will not be able to persuade others of this, unless you know its truth in your own experience.

Meditate upon this, and then think what shall be—

III. Your Answer to the Call

S. Ignatius leaves out of count the coward souls who refuse the call of their King, and speaks only of those who accept it. These fall into two classes.

1. First, those who 'offer themselves whole-heartedly for the work.' 'All who have judgement and reason,' says S. Ignatius, will do as much as this. They recognize that this is the only way in which they can fulfil the purpose of their creation and save their souls. They remember that by their baptism they are pledged to be loyal to Christ, and to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil. They want to be good soldiers of their King, and to follow Him so far as they see and understand Him and His purposes. They resolve to keep their baptismal promises; to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; to obey God's will and keep His commandments unto their life's end. To do as much as this is no mean achievement. It will often cost much, and be a real test of loyalty; and our Lord, we may be sure, welcomes and accepts such honest soldiers, and will reward them magnificently.

2. But there is something beyond this. There are some, S. Ignatius tells us, 'who desire to show greater affection, and to distinguish themselves in a more entire devotion to the service of their eternal King.' They desire it, because Jesus has put it into their hearts to desire it. There has come to them a vision of Him such as is not given to all. They behold Him in His poverty, His humility, His separation from the world, His apostolic labours, His love of the Cross, and they long to be like Him. They are not content to follow their King in the common way—the life of obedience to the commandments; they desire to 'make offerings of greater worth and moment,' to give themselves and all they possess entirely to His service, following Him in the spirit, and, if He should call them to it, in the actual practice, of the evangelical counsels.

Thus this meditation shows us that there are two ways of following Christ, according to the vision of Him which comes before each soul—the way of the commandments, and the way of the counsels.

Look into your own heart. In what way does the vision come before you? What is it in our Lord that most appeals to you and attracts you? Is it His poverty, His humility, His detachment from the world, His desire for the Cross? If so, be sure that He is calling you to some closer following

of Himself. He wants something more from you than you have yet given Him. Your heart and conscience will tell you in due time, if not now, what it is, provided you are listening for His voice. Meanwhile, in ending this meditation, make your act of self-oblation. Tell our Lord that you desire, and are resolved, to give yourself entirely to Him; that you are ready to follow Him in whatever way He may call you to serve Him—as a layman, or as a priest, or, if it should be His will, in the closest following of the religious life.

Imitation of Christ, I. i; II. i.

OUR LORD'S LIFE AT NAZARETH

In this meditation we are to contemplate the example which our Lord gives us of perfection in the common state, while He lived with His Blessed Mother and S. Joseph at Nazareth.

Prel. i. S. Luke ii. 51, 52.

Prel. ii. Picture the cottage at Nazareth, its small rooms and poor furniture, the workshop where our Lord worked by day, the place where He slept at night.

Prel. iii. Pray for grace so to contemplate our Lord in His daily life at Nazareth that you may love Him more, and desire to follow Him more closely.

I. 'He went down . . . and came to Nazareth'

S. Ignatius wishes us to contemplate the mysteries of our Lord's life as if we were actually present while they are being enacted. Let us, therefore, pay a visit to the holy home at Nazareth, and see for ourselves what are the conditions of our Lord's life there.

1. *He passes for the son of a village carpenter.* He accepts the position, and does not seek to be thought of as anything else.

2. *His home was that of a working man,* in a small and obscure village of no very good reputation (*S. John* i. 46), poor and confined, with few comforts, and bare of all luxuries. The same would apply also to His food and clothing.

3. *His occupations.* In His childhood He helps His Mother in household work. Afterwards, as boy and young man, He shares with Joseph the hard manual work of the carpenter's shop; and on the death of Joseph becomes the sole support of the home.

4. *This hidden and obscure life continued for thirty years,* while only three were given to the active work of His public ministry.

5. *Think of the marvel of this hidden life.* Those hands which were occupied day after day in hard mechanical

work were the hands of Him who upholds heaven and earth—the hands of Him who is my King and my God.

6. *Think of our Lord's consciousness of immense powers,* and the work He had come into the world to do; yet He was content to spend by far the greater part of His life on earth in hiddenness and obscurity, in the practice of homely duties and virtues, and of hard monotonous work, in the cottage and workshop at Nazareth.

Surely the lesson He meant to teach me by this hidden life must be a very important one. What is it? It is that the highest and most perfect life consists not in doing great and notable things, nor in occupying high positions; not in severe penances, nor in active zeal, nor in withdrawing from the common life to spend one's days in solitude and contemplation: but simply in doing the will of God from day to day, in whatever kind or state of life He may call me to serve Him.

> The trivial round, the common task,
> Would furnish all we ought to ask;
> Room to deny ourselves; a road
> To bring us daily nearer God.

If our Lord could show forth divine perfection in His hidden life at Nazareth, there can be no place, no circumstances, in which I cannot praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by so doing attain that measure of perfection to which He desires to bring me.

II. 'He was subject unto them'

As the beginning of all human sin was disobedience to God, so obedience is the most necessary of all virtues, and the foundation of all others.

Obedience is incumbent upon every one. However rich, learned, powerful any one may be, whatever his station in life, he does not cease to be a creature, and therefore dependent upon God, and those whom God places in authority over him.

Reason teaches us this. We saw the truth of it in our meditation on the Foundation. Why, then, is obedience so difficult?

First, because of our pride, that poison with which the devil has infected our nature, and which makes us wish to be independent and choose our own way in all things.

Secondly, because we forget the true principle and ground of obedience, viz. that all legitimate authority comes from God. In obeying those set over us we are obeying Him.

It was because our Lord knew that obedience was so difficult a virtue for our fallen nature, that He willed to be subject to His parents for thirty years—just those years of early and developing life when we are especially tempted to assert our independence.

And to whom was He obedient—He who Himself was very God, the Maker and Upholder of all things? To His creatures; and not only to S. Joseph and His Blessed Mother, the holiest of creatures, but, as the son of a working man, to all those who gave Him orders for work, and were no doubt often exacting and rude.

Think of the perfection of His obedience in all the details of that hidden and humble life in the home, the workshop, the village; how prompt it was, how exact, with what cheerful submission of mind and heart, because in those who gave commands He recognized the authority of His heavenly Father, and in everything that was commanded He saw an indication of His holy will.

Make no grievance of it, therefore, if thy calling in life subjects thee to the will of another. Rejoice rather that thereby many an occasion is afforded thee for the practise of that humility and submission to God which will enable thee to conquer thyself, and become more like to Jesus.

O my Jesus, grant that I may love to be unknown and little accounted of; going on contentedly in dull and homely work, and humble submission to all whom Thou hast set over me; for Thy dear sake, who for me wast obedient all those long years of hidden life at Nazareth.

III. 'He Increased in Wisdom and Stature, and in Favour with God and Man'

1. *He grew with a true human growth both of body and mind,* sanctifying thereby every age, from childhood onward, by

passing through all and showing forth the graces and perfections which belonged to each. Thus He is the model for all—the child, the boy, the youth, the full-grown man.

2. *As He grew in bodily stature, so also He increased in spiritual wisdom and grace.* He was indeed ' full of grace ' (*S. John* i. 14) from the first moment of His incarnation ; but He is said to have increased in wisdom and grace as the Divine Life filled progressively His growing faculties, and manifested itself in word and deed before God and man. This is the brief record of our Lord's interior life during all those years of daily toil and obedience in the humble home at Nazareth.

3. *I too must be growing in wisdom and grace* by the cultivation of the interior life, i.e. the life of Christ within me, nourished by sacraments and prayer, by meditation and the practice of the presence of God. Jesus, living within me, must be the vital principle of all I do and say and think. I must conform my conduct to His, valuing things according to His estimate of them, thinking, speaking, acting, suffering, in union with Him, in the power of His grace, and for love of Him.

4. *Jesus increased in favour not only with God, but with man.* If my interior life is real, Jesus living in me will make His presence manifest to others. It was said of the Apostles, that men ' took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus ' (*Acts* iv. 13). Could the same be said of me ? Do my words, my conduct, my life, especially in my home and among those with whom I work, show that I too have been with Jesus, that He is indeed my Master and my King ?

Let me examine myself on these points, especially as to my home duties and how I fulfil them.

O Lord Jesus, give me grace to understand, and love, and practise the example Thou hast given me of humility and contented labour, of obedience and growth in grace. How can I help loving Thee when I see Thee in Thy home ? How can I help trying to make my home life more like Thine ?

Imitation of Christ, I. ix, xi ; III. xiii, xlvii.

OUR LORD REMAINING IN THE TEMPLE

S. IGNATIUS has purposely inverted the historical order of this and the preceding meditation, in order that we may first contemplate our Lord as the perfect model of those virtues which belong to the ordinary Christian life—the life of obedience to the commandments; and then as giving us an example of that more complete detachment from earthly ties which is necessary for those whom He calls to a closer following of Himself in the practice, or at least in the spirit, of the evangelical counsels.

Prel. i. S. Luke ii. 41–49. Jesus, in obedience to the call of His eternal Father, remains, without the knowledge of His Blessed Mother and S. Joseph, in the Temple. They seek Him with anxiety and sorrow. In answer to their remonstrance He says, 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?'

Prel. ii. Picture the Temple courts and our Lord among the doctors.

Prel. iii. Pray for grace to understand the value of every divine call, and to be ready to obey it.

I. THE CALL OF GOD

S. Joseph and Blessed Mary represent the ordinary life. They return home, to the duties of their natural sphere. Jesus, in obedience to the call of His Father, remains behind in the Temple.

In so doing He foreshadows that life of entire and permanent separation from earthly ties which He was afterwards to adopt, when the time came for Him to enter upon His public ministry, and be wholly occupied in His Father's business.

A like call to separation from your old accustomed life, from home and friends, may come to you—a call to live in the spirit of the evangelical counsels as a priest or missionary among the heathen, or in the practice of them in the religious life.

This call may come at any age. But most often it is

heard in early years; for youth is pre-eminently the age of decision, when important and far-reaching choices have to be made; and also because our Lord, who loves all men, has a special love for the young, whose hearts are still capable of generous self-devotion. Of one such young man, though alas! he failed to respond to the call, it is recorded in the Gospel that Jesus 'loved him' (*S. Mark* x. 21). And S. John, the youngest of the Apostles, was the one whom Jesus especially loved (*S. John* xxi. 20).

If such a call has come to you, or should come in your retreat, be sure that it is a token of our Lord's special love for you. It is a proof that you have already received much from Him, and that He wants to give you more. He gives you the call now, because all along He has loved you, and from the first has put into your soul the germs of those qualities of mind and heart which will enable you to understand the call and respond to it, when it is given.

Welcome the call, then, if it comes to you. Value it highly, for it is above all price. Pray that you 'may not be deaf' to it, 'but prompt and diligent' to obey.

II. The Cost of Acceptance

The call of God will often involve us in natural sorrow. When our Lord remained behind in the Temple it must have been a great sorrow to His tender heart to be separated from His Mother and S. Joseph. Natural affection drew Him after them, for He loved them with a perfect filial love, and His heart must have clung to them and to His home with more than an ordinary child's affection.

But God called Him at this time to surrender natural affection in obedience to a higher purpose. He did not break away from natural duties and ties for any mere fancy, but only in obedience to the call of God. He knew that this was necessitated by the redemptive mission He had received from His Father. It was a part of that great sacrifice which was to find its completion on the Cross, and He accepted the pain with joy.

Nor was it only His own heart which felt the pain. Think what must have been the pain and anxiety of His

parents when they realized His loss and, for three days, 'sought Him sorrowing.'

So if God's call comes to us we may have to see others suffer as well as ourselves, parents, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, from all of whom we must henceforth be separated to a great extent. Perhaps too they will not understand us or our motives, and that will be an added pain. They will complain as if they were wronged by what we feel bound to do. 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?' And the only answer we can give is: 'I must be about my Father's business. God calls me, I must obey.'

So think of the natural sorrow in which the call of God may involve us—our own sorrow and the sorrow we cause others whom we love. We may have to leave much behind, parents, home, friends, much that the natural heart clings to, and rightly clings to, for it is God who has made family and home and given us friends. But if the call is clear we must not hesitate. We must be prepared, with Jesus, to suffer ourselves, and to give pain to others. 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me' (*S. Matt.* x. 37). Our Lord asks great sacrifices of those whom He loves the most and calls nearest to Himself.

III. The Promised Reward

When S. Peter on one occasion said to our Lord, 'Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?' our Lord answered, 'There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting' (*S. Luke* xviii. 28–30).

What does it mean—the 'manifold more'? Not that the man who gives up these things for Christ's sake and the Gospel's shall receive them back in a literal way, even though it be a hundredfold; for what, in that case, would be the use of first surrendering them? No, it means that he who gives up these things for Christ's sake, shall receive something more and better than he surrenders—possessions more precious than earth can supply; a life ennobled,

enriched, harmonized; ties less vivid and passionate, but more spiritual and enduring; a love deeper, purer, more spiritual, for those he leaves behind. All the old affection will remain, but deepened, spiritualized, transfigured by the love of God, in whom and for whom he now loves his relations and friends in a new and higher way.

And then the second part of the promise, 'In the world to come life everlasting.' Not the mere deliverance from eternal death, but eternal life in its fullest and most perfect measure, some special nearness to our Lord amongst those who are 'called, and chosen, and faithful' (*Rev.* xvii. 14), virgin souls who sing the 'new song,' which no others can learn, and 'follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth' (*Rev.* xiv. 3, 4).

So think of the example which our Lord gives us in this mystery, leaving His Blessed Mother and His foster father, and remaining in the Temple to apply Himself exclusively to the service of His eternal Father; and if a like call should come to you, pray that you may have grace and courage to obey.

Imitation of Christ, III. x, xxxii.

TWO STANDARDS,

THE ONE OF CHRIST, OUR SUPREME CAPTAIN AND LORD; THE OTHER OF LUCIFER, THE MORTAL ENEMY OF OUR HUMAN RACE

THE purpose of this meditation is: first and chiefly, to show us the means by which Satan on the one hand, and our Lord on the other, seek to draw men to their respective standards, so that, understanding the character and purpose of the two leaders, we may avoid the snares of the one, and follow the inspirations of the other; secondly, to kindle in us a desire to labour under the standard of Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls, as the devil and evil men are constantly labouring for their destruction.

Prel. i. Behold on one side Lucifer, and on the other our Lord, each of them desiring to gather all men under his standard.

Prel. ii. Ask for grace to discover and avoid the snares of Lucifer, and to persevere faithfully under the standard of Christ.

I. THE STANDARD OF LUCIFER

'The first point is to picture to myself how the chieftain of all the enemy seats himself in the midst of that great plain of Babylon, as on a lofty throne of fire and smoke, horrible and terrible to behold.'

The picture is of course symbolical. You need not dwell upon it with your imagination, but meditate deeply upon its meaning. The 'vast plain' represents the 'broad way that leads to destruction' (*S. Matt.* vii. 13), along which so many walk; 'Babylon,' the city of confusion, signifies the disorder of a guilty conscience; the 'lofty throne' symbolizes Satan's pride and cruel tyranny; the 'fire,' of which it is composed, is a symbol of the devouring passions which he kindles and stirs up in souls that yield to him, the 'smoke,' of the darkness and blindness which he produces in their minds and hearts; his hideous features and terrible look express the deformity of sin, and the fear he inspires in

souls when they come to realize how he has ensnared them, and holds them captive in his grasp.

Consider 'how he calls together innumerable demons, and sends them some to one city, some to another, and so on throughout the whole world, omitting no provinces, places, states of life, nor any single individual'; so that there is no one, in whatever state of life he may be, or in whatever place, even the holiest, and as we might think the most secure, who does not need to be continually on guard.

Think of his relentless hatred of mankind, because they have been created by God to fill those places in heaven which he and his rebel angels have lost for ever.

Think of his special hatred of Christ, his Conqueror, and how without ceasing he seeks to draw us away from our allegiance to our Saviour.

Think of his long experience in tempting souls, the craft and subtlety with which he approaches them, hiding his real hideousness and terror, sometimes even transforming himself into an angel of light (2 *Cor.* xi. 14), and tempting us with things which seem harmless, or even good, in themselves, but which he knows will easily become deadly snares, sapping our loyalty to Christ and leading us into sin.

Listen to the orders he gives to his emissaries. He bids them 'ensnare men in nets and bind them with chains,' tempting them first 'with the lust of riches,' then of 'worldly honour,' and so leading them on to 'unbounded pride,' and from that to all other sins. 'Snares' S. Ignatius calls these things, because, though attractive and harmless in appearance, they are really full of danger; and if we set our hearts upon them they soon become 'chains' which bind us with ever increasing bondage. 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' (*S. Mark* x. 23). And if salvation is so difficult for the rich, how much more is perfection! Therefore our Lord said to the rich young man, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor' (*S. Matt.* xix. 21).

How many has Satan ensnared by the desire of wealth, pleasure, honour, independence, making these short-lived

and deceitful goods appear to them the only real goods; and although he can neither give them as a lasting possession, nor make their acquisition certain, he continually tries to excite in us a desire of them, and to persuade us that we shall somehow get them, if we have a little worldly wisdom and are not too scrupulous. Everywhere we see men setting their hearts on these false goods, as though they were the true riches; giving their lives to strive after them, and finding in the end that they have been deceived to their everlasting ruin.

II. The Standard of our Lord

Here again S. Ignatius gives us a symbolical picture. Our Lord is represented as taking His station 'near Jerusalem,' the city of peace, for He is indeed the Prince of peace, and gives to all who come to Him 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding' (*Phil.* iv. 7; cf. *S. John* xiv. 27; xvi. 33; xx. 19, 21); and 'in a lowly place,' by which is expressed His great humility, 'who, being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men' (*Phil.* ii. 6, 7). 'Fair' also and 'gracious to behold,' as we may think of Him in the synagogue of Nazareth, while men 'wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth' (*S. Luke* iv. 22), or on the Mount of the Beatitudes, proclaiming the laws of His spiritual kingdom. And all this again is a picture of the inward peace and sweetness of spiritual consolation with which He is wont, from time to time, to visit the souls of those who are gathered under His standard.

Consider how our Lord sends His servants and friends, 'charging them that they should desire to help all,' by drawing them from worldly and carnal things to spiritual; especially to a love of poverty,[1] humility, and the Cross, by which alone they can be set free from the snares of Satan, and attached firmly and loyally to His own standard.

[1] The poverty here meant is not penury or destitution, but that detachment from earthly possessions and readiness to part with them, which sets the heart free to love God above all else, and to follow the call of Christ, even if it should be to actual poverty in the surrender of everything for His sake and the Gospel's.

Poverty, humility, and the Cross—these are the substance of the 'sacred doctrine' by which our Lord would attach souls to His standard, and lead them in the way of perfection.

And this doctrine is to be preached to *all* men. All are to be invited to walk in this way of perfection, the royal way of the holy Cross. It is open to all: therefore to me. Unfaithful and rebellious though I have been, weak and unworthy as I am, I may still aspire to the perfect following of Christ, and may even hope to be used by Him to draw others to His standard.

How different is all this from the spirit of the world! Nevertheless it is the true spirit and doctrine of Christ; and to help me to accept and welcome it, let me remember, (1) that I am a sinner and cannot safely use the world and its wealth unless I am in heart detached from it; (2) that humiliations are the only way to humility, which I so greatly need; (3) that Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, willed to tread the way of the Cross, and calls me now to follow in His steps.

And if as yet I feel in myself no love of poverty, or humility, or the Cross, I will ask our Lord to give me at least the desire for these things, so holy, so healing to the wounds of my sinful nature, so glorious because they are what He, the eternal Son of God, my Lord and Saviour, chose for Himself. And while I thus pray I will try for love of Jesus to strip myself of unnecessary luxuries, and to accept whatever little humiliations and crosses may come upon me day by day, in order that I may be more ready and able to serve our Lord in any way that He desires to make use of me.

Imitation of Christ, III. xviii, liii, lvi.

THREE CLASSES OF MEN

THE object of this meditation is to test ourselves whether we are really determined to follow the call of Christ, whatever it may cost us.

For the points of our meditation we will take three instances from the Gospel narrative, which will illustrate the principles which S. Ignatius wants us to lay to heart.

In the first point we shall be shown that good desires and intentions are of no avail unless we are willing to take the necessary means for putting them into practice. In the second, that no half measures, no attempts to serve God and mammon, will be sufficient. In the third, that we must have no reserves with God, but be ready to part with everything, if He should call us to do so. The first point is directed against refusing to obey conscience and the call of God. The second, against compromise and insincerity. The third substitutes in place of these a generous resolve to obey the call of God, cost what it may. Therefore we must not be content to remain in the first or even the second class, but must endeavour with all our might to attain to the dispositions of the third, which are the only ones that will ensure our attaining that measure of perfection to which our Lord calls us.

Prel. i. Behold yourself standing in the presence of God and all His saints, desiring to know His will for you.

Prel. ii. Pray for grace to choose that which you see to be highest, and most pleasing to His divine Goodness.

I. THE YOUNG MAN WHO CAME TO OUR LORD WITH THE QUESTION, 'WHAT LACK I YET?' (*S. Mark* x. 17–27).

He had lived apparently a blameless life, keeping all the commandments of God. But he desired something more. He wanted to take some step onward. 'What lack I yet?'

And 'Jesus beholding him loved him.' And He showed His love by giving him the invitation to a more perfect life. 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast,

and give to the poor . . . and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.'

But the young man shrank from the sacrifice. 'He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.'

Think how this was the great crisis of his life. Think of the struggle within, the drawing of grace and holier desires on the one hand, and on the other the love of his possessions which he could not make up his mind to part with. So he went away, sorrowful indeed and with reluctance, but still he went, declining the invitation of Jesus, and choosing the transitory wealth of this world, which will never really satisfy him, rather than the abiding treasures of heaven. The decisive point in his life was that in which he was nearest to Christ, nearest to the way of perfection; but he turned away, making 'the great refusal,' because, though he thought he loved God, he really loved his possessions more.

What his end was, we do not know. He may have come back to our Lord later on, or he may have continued to live a life of obedience to the commandments in the world. But at all events he forfeited a priceless blessing which might have been his. And our Lord's words: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' may well make us fear. We cannot ask counsel of Jesus and not follow it, without grave danger.

What does he think now of those 'great possessions' which held him back? What would he not give now, if he could have once more the choice which was then offered and refused?

II. Judas Iscariot

His is a sadder case and with a sadder ending, because we know that Judas is among the lost.

At first Judas obeyed the call of Jesus. He gave up much to follow Him—not wealth such as the young ruler was called to sacrifice, but at least home, and friends, and his own independence, for a life of poverty and privation, perhaps at times of danger.

And he followed almost to the end. But the question is, How did he follow? Alas! it was with only half his heart. Had he ever really given his heart to Christ? We cannot tell. We know he had a true vocation. Our Lord made no mistake when He called him to be an Apostle. He knew that Judas might have been true to his call, though He knew in fact that he would not. It is a mystery we cannot fathom—the old mystery of God's foreknowledge and man's free will.

Why did Judas fall away? What was it made his life unreal and worked his ruin at last? An old 'root of bitterness' springing up again, covetousness, the love of this world and its goods, ambition for worldly success and recognition, dreams perhaps of an earthly kingdom such as the Jews would have welcomed and accepted—all this dormant for a time in the first fervour of his conversion; then springing up again, not fought against, and so, little by little, reasserting its power, and stealing his heart away from Christ. He did not heed the warnings our Lord gave him, did not look within, did not know how worldly his heart was getting, how unreal his life was becoming. He kept up appearances, kept up a show of zeal and devotion, almost to the last. Then came the great temptation, 'Satan entered into him' (*S. John* xiii. 27), and he went headlong to his ruin.

Let me fear the possibilities of evil in myself, the revival of some old besetting sin, the snare of a divided aim, the impossible attempt to serve two masters, to follow Christ with only half a heart.

III. S. Matthew

Very brief is the account the Gospels give of his call—briefest of all that which S. Matthew himself gives. 'And as Jesus passed forth, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him' (ix. 9). That is all. But how much is contained in this brief record! The turning-point of a soul's history, and all its results for time and for eternity. At the call of Jesus the

flame of true devotion kindled in Matthew's heart, lifted him up from thoughts of earthly gain to high and heavenly desires. At once he arose, left all, followed Jesus, and persevered to the end, and now in heaven he follows the Lamb whithersoever He goeth (*Rev.* xiv. 4).

Meditate upon the call of Jesus and these three answers to it. Apply all to yourself. What does Jesus call me to do? What does my conscience say? What hinders me from obeying? Some sin I am reluctant to part with? Some inordinate affection which must be overcome? Some sacrifice which I am unwilling to make? In all these cases there will be three ways of answering to the call. Like the rich young man, I may refuse; or like Judas, I may try to take a middle course, seeking to satisfy my conscience with a half-hearted and insincere obedience; or like S. Matthew, I may resolve to take the highest course and do the will of God, whatever it may cost me.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxvii, xxxi, xxxii.

S. PETER WALKING ON THE WATER

PREL. i. S. Matthew xiv. 22–31.

Prel. ii. Our Lord walking on the sea, and S. Peter saying, 'Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.'

Prel. iii. Pray that whatever our Lord calls or invites you to do, you may have courage to make the venture of faith and obey.

I. S. PETER'S VENTURE OF FAITH

'Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.' How like S. Peter's loving and impulsive temperament! As soon as he saw Jesus he wanted to go to Him.

But on this wild, blustering night there was something more—not only the eagerness of love, but a great venture of faith. 'Bid me come unto Thee *on the water*.' He too would walk upon the water in order to come to Christ. He is ready (so he thinks) to do what is difficult, dangerous, beyond the power of nature. Yet not without our Lord's bidding. Christ's call must go before his venture.

Our Lord welcomed his love and venture of faith. He answered 'Come.' And in the power of that word, and of his faith in Him who spoke it, Peter stepped out of the boat and walked upon the water.

It was a noble act of faith. Yet here again the Apostle's natural character showed itself. He began well, but he soon failed. At sight of the dark heaving waves he began to fear, and fear begat mistrust. He looked away from Jesus, and began to sink. Then in his peril he cried, 'Lord, save me.' 'And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'

Thus Peter was taught the lesson he so greatly needed —to distrust himself and his own ardent temperament. He did not yet know how weak and inconstant he was. So our Lord allowed him to begin to sink, that he might learn that

he could not be upheld by his own eagerness and warm affection, but only by divine power.

II. Our Venture of Faith

Our Lord welcomed and accepted Peter's venture of faith. He will welcome and accept ours.

There comes to us, it may be, a desire to draw nearer to Jesus, to follow Him more closely, to walk with Him in His mysterious, unearthly life, in a way beyond the power of nature. It may come in many ways—a call to make some great sacrifice, a deeper death to self and to the world; the vision of a life of union with our Lord closer and more intimate than we have yet known; a vocation to the priesthood, perhaps to the religious life. We feel the mysterious attraction, and yet we shrink from it. Can such a life ever be mine? Is it not as far beyond me as if I were to dream of walking like Peter on the water? Can I, dare I, step down out of the ship of the natural life and walk this unearthly path upon the water?

If in any of these ways there comes to you in your retreat the desire to make some venture of faith, to draw in some way nearer to Christ, to embrace a life which you feel to be beyond the power of nature, be sure that Christ our Lord welcomes it, and says to you, as He said to Peter, 'Come.' 'Come and make the venture. Take the first step which will bring you nearer to Me, though it seems to you like abandoning the secure foothold of the ship to trust yourself upon the water. Fear not this; but rather fear to let the good desire I have put into your heart pass away without result. Be afraid of all hesitation and disobedience to the heavenly vision. It is I, your Saviour, calling you to walk by heavenly power in the sure way that will being you to Myself, and to eternal life.'

III. The Need of Humility and Self-Distrust

The call of Jesus, in whatever form it comes to us, must always involve a trial of our faith. It is always a call to something beyond our natural power. It would not be

the call of God if it were not so. So there must be the trial of our faith. Sometimes the first steps are comparatively easy ; there is a sense of exhilaration and power attending them. Afterwards comes the difficulty of perseverance. Temptations beset us, or times of spiritual dryness. We lose heart and courage, and begin to sink. We had trusted in ourselves. We have to learn that such trust will always play us false—that our own strength, which seems so real in times of fervour, is utter weakness in times of temptation, if we look away from Jesus, and fail to trust in Him.

Distrust of self, and looking to Jesus—these are the safeguards of our perseverance. If we look away from Him and begin, like Peter, to sink, let us cry at once, ' Lord, save me ' ; and He will stretch forth His upholding hand, and with its strong grasp will come the reassuring voice, ' O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? ' Not, ' Wherefore didst thou venture ? ' but having ventured and taken the first steps, ' Wherefore didst thou doubt ? I am not changed. I have not failed thee. If I gave thee power to take the first step, I can give thee power to take the next and the next. Doubt not, then, but look to Me. Believe that I am able to uphold thee all the way to the end.'

Thus, then, meditate upon Jesus calling you to come to Him—calling you in that vision of Himself which He shows you, that desire He puts into your heart, that step onward He invites you to take, that resolution He inspires you to make, and which, perhaps, seems to you as far beyond your power to make or to keep as it would be to walk upon the water—calling you to make the venture of faith, to commit yourself wholly to Him, to leave all that hinders you, all half-hearted, halting service, all regrets and backward looks, all doubts and fears, and to take the path which will bring you most surely and most directly to Himself.

And in your prayer say to Him, ' Lord, if it be Thou—if this is indeed Thy will for me, then bid me come to Thee, however difficult, yea impossible, it seems to me. Bid me leave all that seems to assure my position in the world, if only thereby I may come to Thee.'

And if in your heart you hear His voice say ' Come,' that ' Come ' of Jesus, whatever it may call you to do, will give you power to walk in safety over all the waves of this troublesome world, till you come where He awaits you on the eternal shore.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxx, xxxiii, lix.

THE MENTAL SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD

You have made your retreat resolution. Now, in the contemplation of the Passion, you are to find the motive and the strength to keep it.

Prel. i. S. Matthew xxvi. 36–46.

Prel. ii. Our Lord prostrate on the ground in the agony of His prayer.

Prel. iii. Pray for heart-felt sorrow and compassion, because for your sins our Lord goes to His Passion.

I. The Agony and Prayer

Contemplate our Lord as He enters the Garden. He takes with Him three of His disciples, and bids them watch with Him. Then He goes a little further into the shade of the olive trees, 'about a stone's cast,' and kneels down in prayer. Behold Him on His knees, lifting up His hands to heaven, and then prostrate on the earth, 'sore amazed and very heavy.' See the great drops of blood standing out on His face, and then falling one by one to the ground.

Listen to His words. 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' He hides His divinity, restrains its action, that He may be able to feel the full bitterness of this interior passion. And then, out of the desolation of His soul, He prays, 'O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' Who can measure His sorrow and desolation of heart? He prays, and there seems to be no answer.

A second and a third time He returns to His prayer, saying again and again the same words; and always, as He prays, He adds words of perfect resignation and self-surrender: 'nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' 'If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done' (*S. Matt.* xxvi. 39, 42). What an example to us of resignation and perseverance in prayer, especially in times of spiritual darkness and depression!

Think how the disciples are sleeping the while for sorrow, leaving Him to bear His burden alone. Three times He comes to them, and still they sleep. O Lord Jesus, I remember with shame how cold and forgetful I often am when I draw near to meditate upon Thy sufferings. How often hast Thou come to me, seeking some solace from my watchfulness, and hast found my heart slumbering, my love cold, my compassion dried up. I wonder sometimes at Thy disciples, that they could not watch with Thee one hour. Yet, as I wonder at them, I condemn myself.

O Lord Jesus, pardon my weakness, but reveal Thyself to me in love. Help me to watch with Thee. For my sins Thou art going to Thy Passion. Show Thyself to me, that the sight of what Thou dost suffer may rouse me to compassion, and to shame for my insensibility.

II. The Sin-Bearer

Jesus knew, as none other could, the malice and foulness of every single sin that ever has been or shall be committed. As He, the Head and Representative of our race, knelt and fell prostrate in His prayer, He was taking upon Himself the sins of the whole world, as if they had been His own. As of old the sins of the people had been laid, in typical representation, on the scape-goat (*Lev.* xvi. 21); so now, but in an awfulness of reality we cannot understand, the burden of our sins is laid on Him (*Isa.* liii. 6).

There, as He kneels, the hosts of evil spirits circle round Him, and, as it were, clothe Him in a garment steeped in the malice and pollution of all sins, past, present, and to come. One after another, and yet all concentrated in each, they fall upon Him like a fiery rain from hell itself. They close round His heart, and fill His conscience, His memory, His imagination, with their loathsome presence, till He almost feels Himself to be that which He could never be—the guilty one.[1]

Contemplate this mental suffering of Jesus, and then think how we who sin are the very members of His body, our senses His senses, our mind His mind, our hands, and

[1] See Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, xiv.

feet, and eyes, and lips, all of them His. How near this brings our sins to Him! How truly they wound His sensitive heart! How intense the sympathy with which He felt them as His own! The sins of the baptized, the sins of communicants, of those who are in Him and He in them! My own sins—sins which I scarcely dare to think of in His presence!

III. The Fruits we are to Gather

1. *Compassion*, 'heart-felt sorrow, because for my sins our Lord goes to His Passion.' Dwell on these words of S. Ignatius, very touching in their simplicity. For me our Lord 'goes to His Passion.' On other occasions when His enemies sought His life, He passed through the midst of them, or hid Himself from them, and went His way (*S. Luke* iv. 30; *S. John* viii. 59; x. 39), for His hour was not yet come. But now it is their hour, and the power of darkness (*S. Luke* xxii. 53), and Jesus of His own will 'goes to His Passion.'

2. *Contrition*. I have prayed for contrition in the earlier part of my retreat, while meditating upon the foulness and malice of sin in itself, and the punishments due to it. Now I want to deepen my contrition by the consideration of our Lord's sufferings. This is a nobler and more constraining motive, and will call forth a more heart-felt and enduring sorrow.

Therefore I will place myself beside Jesus in the Garden, and as I contemplate the vast burden of the world's sins which He is bearing, my own among them, I will try to deepen my sorrow; and will pray that the remembrance of what He endured for me then may come back to me in all times of temptation, and save me from grieving Him again by wilful sin.

Ever when tempted, make me see,
Beneath the olive's moon-pierced shade,
My God, alone, outstretched, and bruised,
And bleeding, on the earth He made.

And make me feel it was my sin,
As though no other sins there were,
That was to Him who bears the world
A load that He could scarcely bear!

3. *Resolution.* With such thoughts in my mind, and affections in my heart, I will ask myself what I ought, not only *to do*, but *to suffer*, for Him who has done and suffered so much for me. The resolutions I have made during my retreat will be sure to cost me a real effort and struggle, if I am to keep them. It is in the contemplation of what Jesus endured for me, as He bore the weight of my sins upon His heart in the Garden, that I shall find strength to be faithful to Him for the future.

O Lord Jesus, who didst contemplate my sins with such tender love for me, taking them upon Thyself that Thou mightest bear them away for ever; grant that sorrowing for them along with Thee, I may have the grace of perfect contrition, and in grateful love may refresh Thee by the perfect oblation of myself to do and to suffer all that Thou willest, to the glory of Thy holy Name.

Imitation of Christ, II. ix; III. vi, xxix.

THE BODILY SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD

In meditating on the Passion of our Lord we are to seek grace and strength to overcome ourselves and carry out whatever resolutions the Holy Spirit inspires us to make, in order that we may follow Christ more closely and be made more like unto Him.

Prel. i. S. Matthew xxvi. 47–xxvii. 50.

Prel. ii. Recall one or other of the various scenes of our Lord's Passion, from His seizure in Gethsemane to His death upon the Cross.

Prel. iii. Pray for grace so to meditate upon the sufferings of Christ, that you may learn to follow the example of His patience, and in all things to give yourself a willing sacrifice to Him.

I. The Number and Variety of His Sufferings

Follow our Lord through the hours between the evening of Maundy Thursday and His death on Friday afternoon. Behold Him :—

1. Cold, weary, exhausted for want of food and sleep.

2. Prostrate in Gethsemane in the agony of His long struggle in prayer.

3. Bound as a criminal, forsaken by His Apostles, dragged before Annas and Caiaphas, denied by Peter, falsely accused and condemned, spit upon, struck, mocked and jeered at.

4. Brought before Pilate, and Herod, and back to Pilate ; scourged, crowned with thorns and derided as a mock King.

5. Falling beneath the weight of the Cross on the way to Calvary ; enduring blows, kicks, the lashes of the whip as the soldiers drove Him onwards.

6. His clothes torn from Him, opening again His wounds ; the nails piercing His hands and feet ; the dislocation of His bones as His arms and legs are stretched upon the Cross, ' All my bones are out of joint ' (*Ps.* xxii. 14).

7. His weakness from pain and loss of blood ; the weariness and impossibility of gaining any relief from change of posture ; the parching thirst, ' My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums ' (*Ps.* xxii. 15).

8. The separation of His body and soul in death. There was no clouding or loss of consciousness. He retained the full capacity of suffering to the last.

9. Remember that He who suffered all these things was very God. Not that the Divine Nature itself could suffer, but in that human nature which He had taken God did truly suffer.

II. Their Reality

Our Lord suffered as Man. He never used the power of His Godhead to exempt Himself from suffering. He felt all as we should have felt it, only far more acutely. The very perfection of His human nature made Him far more sensitive to suffering than we with our coarser nature can feel it.

Try, in imagination, to feel some of these sufferings in your own person, as if they were inflicted upon you :—

1. The first blow upon His face, its suddenness and unexpectedness, the publicity of it in the presence of the High Priest and so many others. We know what the world thinks of such an indignity. How should I have felt it, and acted under it ?

2. The treachery of Judas, the desertion of the Apostles, Peter's denials ; the false witness, the trumped up charges and lies. How hard I should have felt it to bear any of these things ! Could I bear them as Jesus did ?

3. The mockery and jeers of the High Priest's servants, the Roman soldiers, and Herod's men of war, as they clothed Him in a scarlet robe, crowned Him with thorns, and on bended knee hailed Him ' King of the Jews ' (*S. Matt.* xxvii. 28, 29). How hard I feel it to be ridiculed and laughed at ! Of all indignities, is not this the hardest to bear ?

4. The sharper bodily pains of the scourging, 'the plowers plowed upon my back, and made long furrows' (*Ps.* cxxix. 3); and then the Crucifixion. I hardly dare even to imagine how I could bear such pains as these.

Try in some such way as this to make our Lord's sufferings real to yourself, and then consider that—

III. These Sufferings were for thy Sins

Call to mind individual sins of thine own—pride, anger, impurity, sloth, envy, hatred, avarice. Think of our Lord suffering for each—as if He had stepped in and taken that blow which was due to thee; or when spit upon, that it was for thy pride; or when scourged at the pillar, that it was for thy sins of impurity and sensuality. Think of His being mocked and derided, and thy moral cowardice; of His silence, and thy haste to answer back with angry words; of His exhaustion through want of food and sleep, and thy self-indulgence and sloth.

IV. Their Power

They were the sufferings of One who is God as well as man, and therefore they are full of an atoning power. He was 'made sin,' i.e. a sin-offering, for the sins of the whole world, thine amongst them. 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (*Isa.* liii. 6). Look up to Him upon the Cross. Who is it that is there lifted up? It is God; God in human nature, suffering, dying; and for whom? For all men. Yes, but for me as if I were the only one. He 'loved me, and gave Himself for me' (*Gal.* ii. 20).

1. What a cleansing power there must be in those sufferings, and in that death! The stains on my soul are deep and dark, but surely this great Sacrifice can atone for all! 'He was wounded for our transgressions, . . . the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed' (*Isa.* liii. 5). 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself' (2 *Cor.* v. 19).

2. What graces must issue from those sacred wounds! In every suffering of His Passion our Lord was not only making atonement for our sins, but developing and storing

up within His sacred Humanity grace to help us in all our trials and temptations. And now, as I look up to Him with faith, and pray, He will pour His grace into me, and make it effectual for all my needs.

So let me think of the power of Christ's sufferings (1) to atone for my sins ; (2) to provide grace for my needs.

V. The Fruits I am to Gather

1. *Contrition.* 'Sorrow with Christ in His sorrow, a broken heart with Christ heart-broken, compassion and sympathy with Christ in the great sufferings He endured for me.' This is true contrition, the sorrow of love. This sorrow is possible for me because Christ bore my sins and sorrowed for them, and now gives me His grace that, growing into oneness of spirit with Him, I may hate sin as He does, and long to purify myself even as He is pure.

2. *Gratitude and thankfulness.* He has redeemed me, not with silver and gold, but with His own Blood (1 *S. Pet.* i. 18, 19). What did He see in me that to win me He paid so great a price ? How greatly He must value me ! What love He must have for me ! Surely I must be grateful to Him !

3. *Desire to give myself to Him, who gave Himself for me.* Here at last I reach the practical fruit to be gathered from my meditation on the Passion. All my sorrow and compunction will be barren, unless it issues in the resolution to make some return of love to Him, who has done and suffered so much for me. What is He asking of me in this retreat ? Let me not hold back or refuse. Let not His Passion be in vain for me. I will say to Him, 'Lord, I am no longer my own, Thou hast bought me at the price of Thy Blood. What Thou askest of me, I will give. Where Thou callest, I will follow. Do with me what Thou wilt, for I know that Thou lovest me. Give what Thou dost command, and then command what Thou wilt.'

O my Jesus, Thou hast suffered and died for me ; grant me grace to live henceforth for Thee.

Imitation of Christ, II. xi, xii.

CHRIST RISEN AND GLORIFIED

PREL. i. Rev. i. 10–18.

Prel. ii. Contemplate Christ in the glory of His risen and ascended life.

Prel. iii. Pray that you may know in your own life ' the power of His Resurrection ' (*Phil.* iii. 10).

I. OUR LORD'S VICTORY

1. The death of our Lord was not only the consummation of His life of obedient suffering, and a sacrifice for sins : it was also a victory.

This victory was shown by His Resurrection from the dead. He rose to a true and glorious immortality. ' Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over Him ' (*Rom.* vi. 9). He is now *incapable* of death. His Resurrection was not a return to the old life. ' He did not come back,' says S. Bernard, as Lazarus had come back to this earthly life, but ' He went on.' His human nature entered upon new conditions of glory and of power.

2. His Resurrection was consummated in His Ascension and session at the right hand of the Father, i.e. in the highest place of honour and power. His manhood is now exalted to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (*S. John* xvii. 5). All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth (*S. Matt.* xxviii. 18). He is exalted ' far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come ' (*Eph.* i. 21).

3. Contemplate this glory of His risen and ascended life, His soul flooded with illimitable joy, His body radiant, subtile, impassible, immortal. Enter into His joy. Rejoice with Him because of it. Hail Him as your Deliverer and your King. Consider how He calls you to share His glory and His joy. He is ' the Resurrection and the Life ' (*S. John* xi. 25). ' As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ' (1 *Cor.* xv. 22). As He was stronger

than death's power against Himself, so He is stronger than death's power within us. He is 'the firstfruits' of the resurrection (ibid. 23). Because He is risen, we know that we too shall rise again. Thank Him for this sure and certain hope. Resolve to live worthy of it. Think what it will be to hear Him say to you, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord' (*S. Matt.* xxv. 21).

II. Our Present Relation to Him

1. The glorified life into which our Lord has entered, He gives to us. By His Spirit, proceeding from Himself, He comes to be the Life of our life. He dwells in us, and we in Him. The mysteries of His incarnate life are re-enacted in us. In Him we have died to sin and risen again (*Rom.* vi. 3, 4). With Him we are 'quickened,' 'raised up,' 'made to sit together in heavenly places' (*Eph.* ii. 4–6). The words are used absolutely of our Lord, but of us relatively, depending upon our relation to Him as incorporated into His body.

This is not merely a future hope: it is our present state. Our souls are already raised from the death of sin, quickened with the life of Christ, made to sit with Him in heavenly places.

2. But this heavenly life is at present a hidden life. It is 'hid with Christ in God,' but 'when Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested (at His second coming), then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory' (*Col.* iii. 3, 4, R.V.). Oh guard and cherish this hidden life of grace now: it is the seed of all the glory which is to be manifested in you when Christ shall come again.

3. The Sacraments are the means by which this new and heavenly life is implanted and developed in us. By baptism we are born again of water and of the Spirit (*S. John* iii. 5); by Holy Communion this divine life is nourished and developed in us, and our bodies are being prepared for their Resurrection in glory (*S. John* vi. 51–58).

Thus we may think of the great dignity of our life in Christ: we do really share His risen and ascended life even now. 'Our citizenship is' already 'in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself' (*Phil.* iii. 20, 21, R.V.). What a call is this to holiness and purity of life, in body as well as in soul!

III. Some Consequences of this

1. *Christ in glory is the true centre of our life.* We cannot use our privileges in Him aright, unless we bear in mind the glory in which He dwells. Our faith is not a true and living faith unless it looks up to a living, glorified Saviour, really able to strengthen us in all the difficulties and temptations of our earthly life.

2. *Christ in glory is the object of our worship.* In the Eucharist it is the risen and ascended Christ whom we worship. His presence is not by any local transition, as if He came down from heaven; but by the power of the Holy Ghost He gives His Body to us in the Blessed Sacrament, and lifts us up as we feed upon Him, so that we may dwell in Him and He in us, in the glory of His risen and ascended life. It is to this truth that we are recalled by the *Sursum corda* at every Mass.

3. *The thought of the risen and ascended Christ should afford a standard by which to measure our life and conduct.* Our thoughts, our words, our aims, our actions, our desires—are they such as befit one whose true life is the life of the risen Christ? 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. . . . Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry' (*Col.* iii. 1–3, 5). 'Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, think on these things' (*Phil.* iv. 8).

4. *The power of Christ's Resurrection should inspire us with hope to make progress in holiness.* If in the days of His earthly life there went out virtue from the hem of His

garment to heal the sick, how much more must there be a divine power coming forth from His risen and glorified body, able to raise us from the death of sin to a life of real holiness. And this power is given to us in the Sacraments for healing and renewal, and for growth in grace.

Pray that you may 'know Him, and the power of His resurrection.' Make acts of faith, hope, and courage. Offer your resolutions to God with prayer for grace to keep them. Say to yourself with humility, yet with confidence, Thanks be to God. 'I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me' (*Phil.* iv. 13, R.V.).

Collect for Easter Day.

Imitation of Christ, III. xlvii–xlix.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

PREL. i. Place yourself in thought in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament on the altar or in the tabernacle.

Prel. ii. Pray for an increase of faith, love, and devotion to Jesus in this holy mystery.

I. THE PERSONAL PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

He is present both as God and as Man. As God He was always present in the world. 'All things were made by Him' (*S. John* i. 3). 'He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' (*Col.* i. 17). From the beginning the Eternal Word pervaded all things by His essence, presence, and power. He was therefore always present. But not as the incarnate Word is now present. The Incarnation introduced a new kind of presence. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us' (*S. John* i. 14). And His presence in the Blessed Sacrament is a fruit of His incarnate presence.

It is the presence of the same Lord Jesus with whom His disciples had been familiar, and who had appeared to them after His resurrection. The same, not indeed in mode and condition, but the same in substance and reality.

He has withdrawn His visible form, but He has come to us in a new way, not now conditioned by time and space, but present simultaneously on every altar where the Blessed Sacrament is celebrated or reserved; present really, though in so hidden and mysterious a manner. The Apostles saw Jesus. They saw His sacred manhood, His Godhead they could not see. From us His manhood too is hidden, but we see the Bread and Wine, the veils which hide Him, and we know that He is there. We behold Him with the eye of faith: beyond this there is nothing but the unveiled vision of the saints in glory.

Who can tell the wonders and the glory which this sacramental presence enshrines! We can never exhaust its treasures. Always the mystery will have something more to unfold to us, some fresh experience for us to learn: Jesus in whom are contained all the treasures of grace

and truth, all the personal experiences of the past, the sympathy of the present, the glory of the manifestation yet to come.

II. His Gift of Himself to us

He gives Himself to be not merely with us but in us, that He may dwell in us and we in Him, that we may partake of His substance, that dying to our old sinful nature we may live more and more in Him. Think of this sacramental union of our Lord with us. It is :—

1. *Most real.* 'As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father ; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me' (*S. John* vi. 57). His union with us is so real, so intimate, so vital that He can only liken it to His own union with the Father.

2. *Most loving.* He comes to us in spiritual power to make us one body and one spirit with Himself. Even the mother is separate from the infant at her breast ; but Jesus makes us one with Himself in a true unity of life as we feed upon His Body and Blood by the power of the Holy Ghost. We must therefore receive His gift with spiritual apprehension : only so can we know the reality and love with which He gives it.

3. *Most generous.* He gives Himself not partially but entirely, not His gifts only but Himself, His Body, Soul, and Divinity, all that He is and has. All that we can receive He longs to impart. He holds back nothing because of any unwillingness on His part, only we so little open our hearts to receive. O most generous heart of Jesus, may we at last give all our hearts to Thee !

4. *Most condescending.* He lays aside all outward tokens of His glory that we may not fear to approach and receive Him. He bears with all our dullness of faith and want of love, till we grow stronger and are able to bear the fullness of the union which He longs to effect.

5. *Most wonderful in transforming power.* While we feed on Him He is not changed into our substance, but we are transformed into His. The power of God coming to us

through the human nature of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, meets the wants of our nature in each of its faculties with the grace we need, and should lift us up into a life worthy of Himself. Great must be our joy if we do indeed yield ourselves up to this transforming power.

III. The Purpose of the Gift

He gives Himself to us in order that He may transform us into His own likeness : that He may make each one of us as it were another Christ, all that marked His life to be reproduced in us.

When I receive our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, I receive the grace of—

1. *His humility*, that I may show it forth in my life. As He humbled Himself, so He comes to be a principle, a source of humility, in me ; that I may be content to be hidden, unknown, little accounted of, set aside ; that I may bear contrary things with patience ; that I may be ready to take the lowest place and to serve others.

2. *His poverty*, that I may be detached from earthly things ; content with little ; ready to bear little hardships ; poor in spirit ; ministering to Him in His poor.

3. *His purity*, that my sinful body may be made clean by His body. Bodily temptations need not keep us away, if we are really striving against them. It is here that we shall find the help we need.

4. *His obedience*, to Joseph and Mary ; to those in authority ; to the will and providence of God. This too I receive to manifest it in my life.

5. *His prayer*, that I may be able to pray as He did. Through the Blessed Sacrament He will give me, if I ask Him, the gift of prayer, grace to persevere in prayer, to pray in the Spirit, in the prevailing power of His Name.

6. *His strength and firmness*, as when He vanquished Satan in the wilderness, endured hardness, suffered even unto death. All this strength is given to me that I may resist temptation, endure suffering, and be faithful, if need be, even unto death.

7. *His love for souls.* Think of the love of the Sacred Heart for all the souls of men. And now He wants to win souls through me. He wants to make me love as He loves. Shall I not pray often for this fruit of the Blessed Sacrament, that I may have a real love of souls, and power to win them for Christ?

8. *His glorious risen life.* As He rose in spiritual power, so He comes to impart His glorious Life to me; that dead to sin and to the world I may live in the power of His victorious life, and that my body also may be prepared for a glorious resurrection, because within it there is, as a seed of the glory that is to be, the risen, immortal, glorious Body of our Lord.

Take these or any other characteristics of our Lord's incarnate life which may best suit your needs, and think how in the Blessed Sacrament you receive just what will meet them.

Think how He longs to impart Himself. How He comes as the Good Physician who can lay His finger on the very spot where lies the weakness of our nature. How in all the discipline of His earthly life He has developed in His sacred humanity grace to meet all our needs.

Bow down before Him; worship Him; give Him thanks for all He has given, all He still longs to give. 'Open thy mouth wide, and I shall fill it' (*Ps.* lxxxi. 11). He will make you stronger than all your enemies. He will make you ever more and more what you would wish to be, what He intends you to be, a Christian, not in name only, but in reality and power.

Imitation of Christ, IV. xiii, xvi.

THE LIFE OF UNION WITH GOD IN CHRIST

PREL. i. Contemplate our Lord saying to His disciples, 'If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him' (*S. John* xiv. 23).

Prel. ii. Pray that, by the help of the Holy Spirit, you may enter more and more fully into the meaning and blessedness of this promise.

A life of union with God: this is the goal of all our longings and aspirations. Let us meditate upon it at the end of our retreat. Consider:—

I. ITS DIVINE ORIGIN

Think of it first mystically, i.e. as depending on a divine act, as a part of the mystery of the Incarnation.

We are 'accepted in the Beloved' (*Eph.* i. 6). There has been an act of divine love and power towards man in the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. When we were 'dead in trespasses and sins' (*Eph.* ii. 1) God manifested His love, and wisdom, and power towards us. He 'quickened' us. He gathered us into union with Himself in Christ. We could not unite ourselves to God. He must do that for us. In Christ we who 'were far off' have been 'made nigh' (*Eph.* ii. 13).

We have not, then, to bring ourselves nigh, or ourselves to create this union which is our true life. God has done this for us, and done it, as S. Paul reminds us, from all eternity. 'He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise and glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved' (*Eph.* i. 4–6).

And this eternal choice has been sealed to us individually in time, in our baptism and confirmation, in our call to the priesthood or religion. God's love, God's choice, God's purpose, have been beforehand with us from the beginning.

This is a comforting thought. The life of union with God in Christ depends, in the first place, upon His own act. He has from the first predestinated us to be gathered into union with Himself in Christ. He has made us His children by adoption and grace, and no one (man or devil) shall pluck us out of His hand (*S. John* x. 28). We are safe from all *external* foes so long as we abide in Christ.

II. Its Moral Requirements

Secondly, let us consider this union morally, i.e. as depending also on our co-operation, the cleaving of our will, our inmost personality, to our Lord. Having been grafted into Christ, the True Vine, we are to abide in Him, and to let Him abide in us (*S. John* xv. 4).

How are we to do this amid the pressure and cares of our work, and the manifold distractions of our life?

1. First and chiefly, *by perseverance in the sacramental life*. That divine act by which God has united us to Himself in Christ by baptism is to find its development and perfecting in our Communions. But though as infants we were wholly passive while we received the gift of baptism, it cannot be so now with our Communions. In every Communion we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, but the benefits (the virtue of the Sacrament) depend on our spiritual response. We are not only to take and eat, but also to feed upon Christ in our hearts by faith, i.e. by the activity and response of our spiritual nature, the surrender of ourselves to Him, whom we receive. This calls for effort and watchfulness on our part. Are we preparing for our Communions as we ought? and cherishing the gift after we have received it?

2. *By our regular practice of prayer*, especially our mental prayer. It is in mental prayer chiefly that we feed upon the grace of our Communions, and grow increasingly into union with God.

3. *By study of Holy Scripture and devotional reading*. This will enrich our knowledge of God, and our prayer. Without it prayer tends to become abstract, and our

knowledge of God a knowledge about Him, rather than a personal knowledge of Himself. If we feed upon the Divine Life in our Communions and in our mental prayer, we do so in another way in our reading of Holy Scripture. Our devotional reading may be, as it were, an extended act of spiritual communion, in which our sacramental communions continue to blossom and bear fruit.

4. *By the practice of the presence of God*, that habit of looking up to Him, which will increase with the use of ejaculatory prayer. All our acts, if done with a reverent homage to God's presence, become acts of religion. The varied features of earthly life, however busy, ought not to hinder our devotion to God, but rather to afford occasions for lifting up our minds and hearts to Him.

With regard to all these practices, remember that it is mainly a matter of will and the grace of God, not of feeling. So we need not wait till devout feelings make them easy, but recognizing their importance we shall begin to do them, relying upon God to help us, and in the effort of faith we shall find that He gives us day by day the power we need.

III. Its Sure Hope

Let us end by returning to the point from which we set out, viz. God's part in this life of union with Himself, and thinking how surely we may trust Him who began it by an act of His own, to continue it to the end.

Ponder these words from the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Let us go on unto perfection' (vi. 1). The real meaning of the Greek word (φερώμεθα) is, 'Let us be borne on,' like those who are carried along in a ship. The thought is not primarily of our effort, but of our being borne along. Is not this a thought to help us when we feel discouraged and depressed? Will it not help us then to rest in the thought of Another, a power not ourselves, the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, carrying us onward towards the end? Of course, we must do our part, but that part is very largely the yielding of ourselves to a mightier power working in us, a power able to lift us out of our morbid tempers of

despondency and self-pity, and to carry us onward through dull days and over stormy seas till the sun shines out again and calm returns.

If only we are seeking to abide in Christ, yielding ourselves to that great act by which He has taken us into Himself, and is still bearing us on by His Spirit, then for us there shall be no failure. God will perfect the work He has begun in us. He will make us fit for that place and work in the perfect whole, for which He foreordained us, and chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be 'to the praise and glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

Collect for Christmas Day.

Imitation of Christ, III. xxi, xxxiv.

APPENDIX I

Instructions

I. HOW TO USE THE MEDITATIONS

BEFORE beginning the meditation, read over the printed outline, or, if the meditation has been given viva voce, read over your notes of it. Stand[1] for a moment at the place where you are about to make your meditation, and realize that you are going to present yourself before God, to speak with Him and He with you.

Then kneel and say slowly, *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.* After this, make the three following acts, quite briefly and in your own words, in some such way as this :—

1. An act of faith in the presence of God, and adoration of His majesty ; e.g. *My God, I believe that Thou art present with me, yea within me, and knowest all my needs. Out of the depth of my nothingness I adore Thee, my God and all my good.*

2. An act of humility and contrition ; e.g. *My God, I confess that I am not worthy to come before Thee, by reason of my many sins and numberless negligences. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.*

3. An act of self-oblation, with prayer for light and grace to make your meditation to the glory of God and the benefit of your soul ; e.g. *My God, I offer myself to Thee in my meditation and prayer, to spend this time as Thou willest and knowest to be best for me. Help me to put away all vain, evil, and wandering thoughts ; enlighten my understanding ; kindle my affections ; teach me to pray, and may Thy Holy Spirit pray within me.*

Then say the *Veni Creator*, or some other prayer invoking the Holy Spirit to help you in your meditation.

Next will follow the preludes. For their purpose and use see the Note at the end of this Instruction.

Having thus entered upon your meditation, take the points one by one. Keep to the subject before you. Do not allow yourself to think that you have no need of it, or that some other would be more helpful. This is

[1] i.e. if you are alone.

what God has provided for you. Apply your mind to comprehend and penetrate each truth rather than to develop the points at length. It is not the amount of knowledge nor a variety of striking or original thoughts which satisfies the soul and kindles spiritual desires, but 'to feel and taste the truths interiorly.'[1] Therefore if one point, or even a single sentence, strikes you and awakens devout affections, pause upon it and make acts arising out of it, till both mind and heart are fully satisfied.[2] Do not be in a hurry to pass on. The great object of meditation is to be penetrated with the truth, so as to love it and act upon it. The exercise of the understanding is of little use unless it kindles the affections and moves the will. Meditation is not concerned with mere abstract truth. We meditate in order to come to the Personal Truth, that is to God; and it is only while we love that we can come to Him. 'He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love' (1 *S. John* iv. 8).

At the same time we must make our meditation practical by applying the various points to ourselves. What does this truth teach me about God? About myself? What have I done about it hitherto? What ought I to do now? What would our Lord have done? What shall I wish that I had done when I come to die? What would be my advice to another in the same circumstances as myself?

These and such like reflections will lead to acts of the affections, petitions, and resolutions. Petitions are a very important part of meditation. It is not enough to know what we ought to do and to wish and resolve to do it; we must also ask for grace to be faithful to the inspirations of God. Pray, then, for this grace; and pray also for any other graces and virtues you feel your need of, or which the Holy Spirit inspires you to ask for.

Although acts of the affections and petitions naturally follow the exercise of the memory and the understanding, and flow more freely towards the end of the meditation, yet they are not to be made only at the end. On the contrary, these colloquies with God should be made *throughout* the meditation. They are indeed the most important part of it. We meditate, i.e. consider and reflect, chiefly

[1] S. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, Annot. II. [2] op. cit. Addition IV.

in order that we may be led on to prayer, and the sooner we can pass from meditation to prayer the better.

It is not well, however, always to force ourselves to put into words what we would say to God in these colloquies. Sometimes we speak to Him best with stammering lips or even in silence.[1] At any rate whatever words we do use should be unstudied and as simple as possible. 'God does not want our words, but our hearts.'[2] Often it is helpful just to repeat over and over again the same brief act or petition, with all the strength of desire and will we can.

In retreat whatever resolutions you may be led to make during each meditation should lead up to, and at last be gathered into, one or two final ones bearing upon the object for which the retreat is made, whether it be the determination of vocation, the reformation or renewal of spiritual life, preparation for some work to be undertaken, or any other purpose. Do not be in a hurry to make these final resolutions. Look to God to show you what they should be. The earlier exercises of the retreat are intended to prepare your soul, through penitence and detachment, to receive light from God, and to follow His call when made known.

In ending each meditation, (1) ask pardon for any faults or negligences of which you may have been guilty while making it; (2) thank God for the help He has given you; (3) pray for grace to bring to good effect the good desires and purposes He has put into your mind. Conclude with an *Our Father*, *Anima Christi*, or some other suitable prayer.

One hour should, if possible, be given to each meditation.

As to posture: you may meditate either kneeling, sitting, or standing, or at times prostrate on the ground, as may best help you to gain the fruit you seek. But it is well to remember S. Ignatius' counsel, 'If kneeling I find that which I desire, I will not change to another position,'[3] and in any case we should begin and end on our knees.

If God gives you light and consolation see that you derive from it all the fruit of amendment of life and spiritual progress God intends you to gain. Beware of vain complacency, and receive the grace with humility.

On the other hand, if you should find yourself in spiritua darkness and desolation, or beset with distractions and

[1] See Rom. viii. 26. [2] R. M. Benson. [3] op. cit. Addition IV.

temptations, do not on that account give up or shorten your meditation. S. Ignatius advises that in such cases we should even prolong the time for a short space, so as to overcome the enemy.[1] Try quietly to recall your attention, and say some few words of prayer from time to time to obtain the grace you desire ; humble yourself before God, and patiently endure. Do not be discouraged. If you have done your best your meditation will not be fruitless. You may not have obtained the precise fruit you had hoped for, but God will have given you something else, which He sees you need more. To rise from our meditation with nothing but a deepened sense of our poverty and helplessness, and our great need of grace, may sometimes be of more real profit than many lights and consolations.

NOTE.—Each meditation is introduced by two preludes. The first, which S. Ignatius calls ' a composition,' is an act of the imagination by which we picture to ourselves the place where the mystery on which we are about to meditate takes place. If, however, the subject of the meditation is something invisible, we may make use of some suitable illustration, as in the meditations on sin where S. Ignatius says the prelude will be : ' to see with the eye of the imagination and to consider my soul as imprisoned in this corruptible body, and my whole self, body and soul, in this vale of misery, as in exile among the brute beasts.'

The purpose of this prelude is to restrain the wanderings of the mind by binding it down to some definite image, which provides a setting for the meditation. Those who cannot use the imagination in this way, or do not find it helpful, should pass lightly over this prelude. It is just an expedient which some may find helpful, others not. In any case there must be no straining of the mind.

The second prelude is a brief prayer asking ' for that which I desire,' i.e. the particular grace I desire to gain from the meditation. It should be made very briefly, but with all possible reality and earnestness.

To these two preludes another is prefixed when the meditation or contemplation is on the life, passion, or resurrection of our Lord. It consists of a few verses from the Gospels which bring forward the subject of the meditation. For want of space these passages are not printed in full, but only the references to them are given.

[1] *Spiritual Exercises*, Annot. XIII.

II. SIN

'SIN is the transgression of the law' (1 *S. John* iii. 4). It is disobedience to God. We may sin by thought, word, deed, or omission. The essence of sin is in the will, in the act of the will at conscious variance with the holy will of God. The outward act adds indeed an accidental wickedness, but the essence of sin is in the soul itself, even if no outward act follows.

I. MORTAL AND VENIAL SIN

This distinction is found in Holy Scripture. S. John says 'there is a sin unto death' and also 'a sin not unto death' (1 *S. John* v. 16). So in the Litany we pray: 'From fornication, and all other deadly sin, good Lord deliver us.'

Common sense tells us that all sins are not equally bad. Some we feel at once are grave matters, others lighter, others again scarcely more then imperfections. Between these two extremes there are many degrees of sin, and it is often difficult to say where the line can be drawn between sins which are venial and those which are mortal. Much may depend on circumstances, so that what may be venial in one case may be mortal in another.

But speaking generally three things must concur to make a sin mortal: (1) it must be a sin in some grave matter; (2) there must be clear knowledge that it is a grave sin; (3) there must be full and deliberate consent of the will. If any of these conditions are wanting the sin is not mortal.

The 'Seven Deadly Sins' is a misnomer. Their right name is the 'Seven Capital Sins,' which means that they are seven heads under one or other of which all sins may be classed; or seven fountains of sin from which all other sins flow. We can sin under each of these seven heads either venially or mortally, according to the gravity of the matter, and the fullness of our knowledge and consent.

II. Effects of Mortal Sin

1. *Mortal sin kills the soul.* As the soul is the life of the body, so the grace of God is the life of the soul, and one mortal sin kills it, for it separates the soul from God. So it was with the rebel angels. In one moment they lost the life of grace and were cast out of heaven. So it was with our first parents. By one sin of disobedience, grave because of the penalty of spiritual death attached to it (*Gen.* ii. 17), they forfeited the life of their souls. One mortal sin separated them and all their posterity from God. So with us, one mortal sin kills the soul and separates it from God.

2. *Mortal sin robs the soul of all the merits it has acquired.* All the good works done by a soul in the state of grace are an increase of treasure laid up in heaven, and have the promise of an eternal reward, if the soul perseveres in grace to the end. But one mortal sin forfeits all. 'When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity . . . all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die' (*Ezek.* xviii. 24). True, if the man repents, the merits of these lost works will be restored, but without repentance they are dead and lost for ever.

3. *Mortal sin destroys the very power of doing good works pleasing to God.* All the actions of a man in a state of mortal sin are dead; they have no power to prevail with God for his salvation. If a tree is dead, it cannot bear any fruit. So with the soul dead in sin. 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing' (1 *Cor.* xiii. 3). Without charity, i.e. the love of God, or sanctifying grace, which is lost by mortal sin, the soul is dead before God; and a dead soul has no power to do anything pleasing to God and profitable for salvation. Faith and hope may remain, though sadly weakened, but still sufficient to enable the soul to respond to grace when offered and to repent. But till the soul repents and is reunited to God, all its actions are dead.

4. *Mortal sin leaves the soul in perpetual danger of falling into hell.* A soul in mortal sin is like a man hanging over a precipice by a slender rope. If that rope breaks, he is

lost. So, if the slender rope of a man's life break, if his life should be cut short by accident or disease, while he is in mortal sin, he will be lost for ever.

III. Effects of Venial Sin

Venial sins do not altogether kill the soul. They are sins committed in less serious matters or without the same knowledge and deliberate consent that are necessary to make a mortal sin. They are sins rather of infirmity and surprise into which every one is apt at times to fall. There are, of course, many degrees of venial sins, ranging from those which are scarcely sins at all up to those which are very near the border line, where they might easily pass over and become mortal.

But though venial sins are not in themselves deadly, we must not think lightly of them, as though they were of little consequence.

1. *For first, they diminish fervour, and weaken the soul.* They are the sickness of the soul, though not yet its death. Life remains, but the health and vigour of the soul are impaired. That is why we so often make no progress in spiritual life, and even fall back; why spiritual duties are felt to be so irksome, and perseverance so difficult; why our prayers are so languid, and our communions bear so little fruit. It is because our souls are weak and sickly through a multitude of venial sins, which we are not trying to overcome. So the fervour, and joy, and power of the soul's life are lost.

2. *Secondly, venial sins prepare the way for those which are mortal.* Just as slight bodily ailments pull down our strength and make us susceptible to more serious diseases, so lesser sins prepare the way for greater. The devil does not usually tempt us with the greatest sins all at once. That might shock and frighten us, and so would defeat his purpose. He usually begins by getting us to yield to smaller sins. Then, when the conscience is dulled and the will weakened, he brings up his great temptation to some mortal sin of the same kind, and the soul has not strength to resist. Mortal sin is committed, because temptation to lesser sins has not been resisted.

3. *Thirdly, though venial sins do not kill the soul at once,*

they may come, by their number and frequency, and our attachment to them, to extinguish the life of grace at last. The snowflakes, each so small and light in itself, may overwhelm the weary traveller in the end. A small leak, if not stopped, will sink the ship. Not that any number of venial sins, if heaped together, would make a mortal sin. But a venial sin may become mortal because of the contempt for God shown by wilfulness and frequent repetition, or by some other circumstance, e.g. if it be committed with a consciousness that it will certainly lead to a mortal sin.

It is, therefore, very dangerous to allow ourselves to be careless about our venial sins. Indeed S. Chrysostom says that what we are apt to think of as little sins are sometimes more dangerous than greater ones. For a fall into grave sin might startle the soul and rouse it to return at once in penitence to God ; but the frequent venial sins remain unnoticed, while they are all the time secretly choking up the avenues of grace, and the soul's life is dying out.

III. CONFESSION

We go to confession so often that there is a danger of going as a matter of routine, and without proper preparation.

To make a good preparation four things are necessary.

1. Ask the help of the Holy Spirit. 'Lord, show me my sins, and make me truly sorry for them.' We need this help of the Holy Spirit, because the devil and our own pride will often hide our sins from us, or make us unwilling to face them.

2. Examination of conscience. If you are preparing for your first confession, divide your life into periods, childhood, school days, later life. Take pencil and paper. Note the sins most on your conscience. Perhaps what weigh most upon you are some isolated sins committed a few times. Or it may be some habits of sin which have run through a large part of your life, and hold you captive still. When you have got these off your mind you will be able to see other things more clearly. Think of the places where you have lived, your companions, your work, your play, your words, and thoughts, the sins you most often commit now. Then take questions on the ten commandments and the seven capital sins. These will help you to recall other things. Make brief notes, just enough to aid your memory when you come to make your confession. Tell the priest who is helping you in your retreat that you want to make your first confession. He will give you more detailed instructions, and arrange a time to hear you.

For an ordinary confession, if you make it frequently, not much time will be needed for examination. From five to ten minutes should ordinarily be sufficient. To avoid needless anxiety, remember (1) we are only *obliged* to confess our mortal sins and those we think may be mortal; yet (2) though not *bound* to confess venial sins, it is best to do so if we are in earnest about saving our souls and advancing in holiness; (3) *forgotten* sins are forgiven along with those we confess; if, however, they are of a grave character they

should, when remembered, be mentioned at our next confession.

It is good to note the roots of our sins. This helps us to know ourselves; and often it is a good exercise of humility to confess the motive which led to the sin, for it is sometimes a greater humiliation to confess a bad motive, or some little detail, than the actual sin.

A good order in which to arrange our confession is (1) sins against God, (2) sins against our neighbour, (3) sins against ourselves. This last division would include such sins as sloth, greediness, pride, impurity. Of course all sins are against God, and some sins against oneself may also be against one's neighbour.

3. Act of contrition. This is the most important part of our preparation, and perhaps the one most often neglected. It is the most important because a good act of contrition can avail for forgiveness without confession when this latter cannot be made, while confession without contrition, or at least without attrition,[1] would be unavailing. We may stir up contrition by a brief meditation on the goodness of God whom we have grieved and offended, the sufferings of Christ, or the punishments due to sin. Sometimes also it may help us to think what we might have been after all the grace bestowed upon us, and what in fact we are.

We must not be distressed if we have not the feeling of sorrow. The essence of contrition is not an emotion, but an attitude of the will. Do I want to love God? Am I resolved with His help not to sin again? That is contrition whatever may be the state of my feelings.

4. A firm purpose of amendment. This is really a necessary part of contrition, but because of its importance we may think of it separately. We should look back to what have been the occasions and causes which have led us into sin, and then make a definite and strong resolution to avoid them for the future. We must also look forward and determine the means we must take in order to do this.

[1] i.e. imperfect sorrow arising from some supernatural motive short of the love of God, e.g. the fear of hell. This suffices for receiving Absolution, provided it includes a firm purpose of amendment.

Thus we shall direct both our contrition and our purpose of amendment to definite sins or failings. Lastly we must pray earnestly for grace to keep our resolution.

5. The confession. If kept waiting for your turn in the confessional, be careful not to lose your contrition. Take the waiting time as a little exercise of patience. If you foresee that you may have to wait for half an hour or more, occupy yourself with meditation or spiritual reading, or say the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary or other prayers on the Passion.

It is not necessary to write down the words in which you will make your confession. Tell your sins simply, in the most natural way, using your notes, if you have any, only to call to mind what you have to speak about.

Remember that you are confessing to God, who knows the secrets of your heart. Deliberately to keep back one grave sin, or to try to conceal its real character by vague language, would be to make a sacrilegious confession, and to add a terrible sin to all you have already done. Moreover, it would make all subsequent confessions invalid till it was acknowledged and put right. If you find it difficult to speak of any sin, or do not know how to describe it, ask the priest to help you.

A confession should not be of mere generalities which might apply to almost any one, and do not really disclose the state of your soul: e.g. 'I confess that I have been proud, angry, slothful, etc.' It should be more specific: 'I confess that I have constantly wished to appear, or tried to make myself appear, better, cleverer, richer, more influential than I am. I have brooded over unkind words, and planned to repay them. I have stayed too long in bed, etc.'

On the other hand, the confession should not go into unnecessary details. Say enough to make plain the character of the sins, the number of times each has been committed, so far as you can remember, and any aggravating circumstances.

Do not be discouraged if you find that you have to confess very much the same sins time after time. However often or badly you may fail, return to God at once with as good an act of contrition as you can make, resolving, in

the case of any mortal sin, to make your confession as soon as you can. Then renew your purpose of not sinning again, humbling and distrusting yourself, but never losing your trust and confidence in the mercy and goodness of God.

In retreat it is often good to make a review of your life since your last retreat, and to confess at least the chief sins committed since then. But it is best to consult your confessor about this. What is good for one person may not be good for another.

IV. TEMPTATION

TEMPTATION is not sin. Our Lord was tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Temptations become sins only when we seek them, or desire them, or yield to them.

They come to us from three sources, the devil, the world, and the flesh, i.e. our own fallen nature.

Temptations to sin do not come from God, but they are permitted by Him for our moral and spiritual exercise and training. They are the raw material of glory. Resistance of them is preparing us for our future reward in heaven. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him' (*S. Jas.* i. 12, R.V.).

We are never obliged to sin. God 'will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it' (1 *Cor.* x. 13, R.V.). The power of God is stronger than the powers of evil, and He always gives us sufficient grace to conquer, if we will ask for it, and use it.

SOME HINTS FOR DEALING WITH OUR TEMPTATIONS

BEFORE THE TEMPTATION

1. Temptations often come suddenly and unexpectedly; therefore we must be watchful. 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak' (*S. Matt.* xxvi. 41).

Do not fear them inordinately; fear paralyses the energies of the soul, and makes us yield more easily.

2. Avoid all occasions of sin, especially of your besetting sin, e.g. do not keep a bad book which you wish to read, though you know it would be a sin to do so. Avoid all places, persons, things, occupations, amusements, pictures, sights, trains of thought, which are dangerous to you, even though they may be harmless to others. The guardianship

of the eyes is a great protection against many temptations. We pray, 'Lead us not into temptation'; therefore it is presumptuous to put ourselves into temptation without cause.

3. Remember that God is with you in temptation. He permits it for your good, that by resisting it you may lay hold upon His grace, and glorify Him. He will not fail you if you look to Him. Struggling against temptation strengthens the soul, as wrestling strengthens the body. Temptations resisted help us to acquire virtue and experience in our spiritual warfare.

DURING THE TEMPTATION

1. Resist from the outset, and pray earnestly for help. The enemy is more easily kept out than forced out after he has entered. 'It is easier to forbid the beginnings of feelings than to control their might' (*Seneca*).

2. Keep calm. Do not think you must have yielded, because the sinful desire or imagination is suggested by the devil. There are many thoughts *in* us that are not *of* us.

Involuntary pleasure in the suggestion is not a sin. Sin is the consent and act of *the will*: we cannot sin accidentally. If there should be some slight negligence in resisting, the sin would be only venial, not mortal.

3. If the temptation persists, or recurs again and again, resist it each time. This shows courage and loyalty to God. S. Francis de Sales says the persistence of a temptation is often a sign that we have not consented, as a dog goes on barking because he is not let in. However sorely you are pressed, you are victorious so long as you go on fighting. You are only conquered when you lay down your arms and desert the standard of your King.

4. Never tamper with your conscience or parley with the devil, 'Perhaps it is not wrong,' or 'I wish it were not wrong,' or 'I can do it only this once and then go to confession, if it troubles me.' If you do this the devil will win every time. He is stronger and more cunning than you.

5. In the case of some temptations, especially those against faith and purity, flight is our surest defence. Lay

down the dangerous book, burn it, break off the conversation, leave the place, occupy yourself with something that will interest you and turn your thoughts into another channel. Bodily exercise or manual work is sometimes a great help. Should the temptation still persist, endure it as you would a noise which disturbs you. Treat the devil with contempt, and often he will leave you.

6. Seek help from your confessor. S. Ignatius tells us (Rules for the discernment of spirits xiii) that the enemy acts like a seducer who wishes, above all, that his advances should be kept secret. His power lies largely in inducing us to keep silence about his temptations. Then he has a chance of continuing to trouble us with them, and of leading us in the end to ruin. Therefore it is good to disclose them to our confessor. When we do so they often vanish, or are greatly weakened. At any rate our humility will win for us an increase of grace, and we shall have the help and encouragement of our spiritual father.

AFTER THE TEMPTATION

1. Do not worry because you cannot be quite sure whether you have yielded or how far you have yielded. Ask yourself, ' Did I put myself in the way of temptation, or wish to have it ? Did I take *deliberate* pleasure in it ? ' If the answer to these questions is, ' No,' you have not sinned ; at least not mortally.

2. If there has been some negligence, make an act of contrition, and resolve to be more on your guard for the future.

3. If you know that you have sinned, and perhaps grievously, return to God at once with an act of humility and contrition, resolving to seek absolution as soon as possible. Do not brood upon the sin, or worry over it. Put the thought of it away till you prepare for your next confession, and meanwhile make what reparation you can to God by renewed love and fervour.

4. Remember that the devil has probably only left you for a time, therefore, while you put your trust in God, distrust yourself ; watch and pray.

V. RESOLUTIONS

EVERY retreat should lead up to some one or more resolutions. We come into retreat not merely to spend a few days in meditation and prayer, but to see what needs to be put right in our life, and what step onward in spiritual life God invites and calls us to take. The light God gives us will point to some resolutions we ought to make.

Resolutions, therefore, are a most important part of a retreat. Without them the fruit of the retreat will most likely be lost. The light God gives us will die away. We shall forget what we saw so plainly in the retreat. The good desires God puts into our hearts will grow cold. It is the nature of feelings and emotions to change and pass away. God gives them for a time, and for a purpose : to encourage us to make a new start, to help us do something hard, to draw us to Himself by the sweetness He allows us to feel. But these feelings will not last. Gradually they will die away. Do not be distressed at this, or think something must be wrong with you. Feelings are not the essential thing in the spiritual life. When they have passed, the resolutions we have made will preserve the real fruit of the retreat.

If a resolution is to be useful, and to be kept, it must be both practical and definite. Many resolutions may be good in what they aim at, but they are too indefinite, too vague. They will never hit the mark. For instance, you resolve to be humble. That is good, but it will not help you unless you bring it down to particulars, and resolve to practise humility in such and such ways, or on such and such occasions. Ask yourself, In what way do I most often fail in humility? How do pride and vanity show themselves in me? in indulging vain thoughts about myself, my doings, my belongings? in boasting or talking about myself? in seeking to dominate in society or in conversation? Or in spiritual pride, thinking myself better than others? in self-complacency, and despising others?

Your resolution, then, must be definite, something to be done, not merely aimed at in a vague sort of way ; something you can examine yourself about at night, and know whether you have kept it or not.

Again, a resolution should be made calmly and deliberately, not in a moment of great fervour or excitement, in which case you would be in danger of undertaking more than you can reasonably hope to carry out, or things that might be unsuitable to your circumstances.

On the other hand, you must not shrink from making resolutions that will cost you much, and call for a real effort of perseverance. Count the cost, but do not on that account hold back from making them. God, who inspires you to make them, will supply the grace to keep them.

What resolutions ought you to make ? Ask God to show you. Do this frequently during the retreat, lifting up your heart to Him with the prayer, ' Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee.'

Towards the end of the retreat review the way along which you have been led. The thoughts which came home to you most in your meditations are doubtless those which concern your own needs, and point to the resolutions you should make.

Listen to your conscience. God will speak to you through it. Think over your life for the past year, or since your last retreat. Where have you most failed ?—in your duty to God, to your neighbour, or to yourself ? What does God seem to be inviting or urging you to do now ? Think of some of the things about which it may be useful or necessary to make a resolution at the present time.

1. Your besetting sin. What is it ? How can you best guard against it ? What occasions of it must you avoid ?

2. Your prayers. Do you give to them sufficient time, care, reverence, attention ? Your private prayers, self-examination, intercession, preparation for Communion and thanksgiving after it, spiritual reading, meditation—is there anything that needs to be attended to in any of these ?

3. Your work. Do you give sufficient time to it ? Is it done thoroughly, to the best of your power ? Are you

making the best use of your talents and opportunities, whether they be great or small?

4. Your home life. Is there anything that wants putting right there—selfishness, lack of cheerfulness, helpfulness, courtesy, good temper?

5. Money—extravagance, self-indulgence, not paying bills promptly; not giving alms as you ought?

6. Your vocation. Perhaps God has shown you in your retreat that He is calling you to the priesthood, or to mission work, or to the religious life. One of your resolutions might be to pray daily for God's further guidance in the matter, and for grace to obey His call.

7. A rule of life. If you have not yet made one, now is the time to draw it up, or perhaps to revise a rule made some time ago. In either case it would be prudent to submit it to your confessor before finally resolving upon it.

These are just a few suggestions of various directions in which you may look for the resolutions you ought to make. There may be others which God and your conscience will point out.

Having made your resolutions, and obtained the approval of your confessor, write them down, and pray for grace to be faithful in keeping them. A good plan might be to renew them daily at your morning prayers, and examine yourself about them at night. If you did this for a month they would be fixed in your mind. But even then it would be well to read them again from time to time lest they should gradually be forgotten. You might do this when you prepare for confession.

A few words on two other points may be in place here.

1. S. Ignatius has a great deal to say about what he calls 'The Election.' By this he means primarily the choice of a state of life, such as the priesthood or the religious life. An election of this kind should only be made after much consideration, and with the advice and help of some experienced priest who can explain and apply the rules and methods laid down by S. Ignatius for making it wisely and rightly.

2. If you feel that there is some resolution you ought to

make, and yet you shrink from the sacrifice or the struggle it will involve, it may greatly help you to make use of some of the simpler rules S. Ignatius gives.

(*a*) Think of the end, twofold yet one, for which you were created—to love and serve God, and in so doing to save your soul.

(*b*) Call to mind what God and your conscience are urging you to do as the fruit of your retreat. Be sure that God asks you to do nothing that is not for your welfare and real happiness.

(*c*) If some one, faced with the same moral and spiritual problem as yourself, and whose real good you desired, were to ask you what he ought to do for the glory of God and the salvation of his soul, what advice would you give him? The advice you would give him is that which you ought to follow.

(*d*) If you were on your death-bed, what would you wish that you had done now about this matter? What you would then wish that you had done, do now.

(*e*) When you think of appearing before God for judgement, as one day you must, what decision in this matter will then give you confidence and joy? That is the decision you ought to come to now.

According to these rules, so simple and yet so sure in their application, make your resolution, offer it to God with trust in His love and care for you, and pray Him to accept and bless it.

VI. ON GOING OUT OF RETREAT

THE following advice, taken mainly from the *Directorium in Exercitia*, Cap. xl, will be found useful.

Just as when a man goes out of a warm place into a cold one he may easily and quickly become chilled, unless he takes good care to maintain the heat that is in him; so nothing is easier than for one who at the close of the Exercises returns to his ordinary life and conversation, to lose in a very short time the fervour and light which he has gained. And there is a special danger of this because whatever good he has gained is not yet confirmed so as to become habitual, but is rather of the nature of an emotion, which is easily weakened, or even altogether lost. And when this happens, all the labour and all the fruit of the Exercises is lost.

Therefore the first piece of advice to be given to one who has finished the Exercises is that he should set a high value upon this beginning and foundation of a spiritual life, which, by the grace of God, he has laid in his retreat, and should accept it as a great benefit bestowed upon him by God, yea the greatest of all benefits, and should firmly believe that all the lights and all the knowledge which he has gained in the Exercises have been bestowed upon him by God our Lord with a particular individual love, and that as such he should study to preserve and guard them. Let him moreover fear, lest if hereafter he does not live as he has come to know that he ought to live, he should be the more severely punished by God for his ingratitude, and because greater condemnation is due to one who knows what is good and does it not.

And secondly, let him understand that he has as yet done nothing except to receive the good seed sown by God in his soul, and that unless this seed is cherished and cultivated, so as to come to maturity and bear fruit in due time, it is of itself little or nothing. This therefore ought

to be his first care, not to let the good seed be snatched away by the birds, that is by evil spirits, or choked by the thorns, viz. earthly and corrupt thoughts and desires. Therefore let him avoid not only sins, but also the occasions of them, especially of those to which he was prone before making the Exercises, for it is against these that he ought most of all to arm himself, since it is so easy to fall back into them.

[1] Thirdly, he should be exhorted to preserve and cherish, by pious and spiritual exercises, the devotion he has now gained. Amongst such exercises the following may be especially commended: first, that he should maintain the practice of meditating daily for half an hour, if possible. Secondly, that he should make an examination of conscience every day. Thirdly, that he should confess and communicate regularly. Fourthly, that he should choose some good confessor and take him for his guide, treating with him of everything that concerns his soul. Fifthly, that he should daily read a portion of Holy Scripture, and of some spiritual book such as the *Imitation of Christ*, *The Devout Life* by S. Francis de Sales, the *Spiritual Combat*, etc. Sixthly, that he should draw up a suitable rule of life, and endeavour to keep it exactly. Seventhly, that he should endeavour daily to advance in virtues, especially humility, patience, and charity. And in fine, that he should strive after the highest perfection which, in his state of life, and according to the measure of divine grace given him, he is able to acquire.

To this advice given in the *Directorium* a few more words may be added, by way of caution :—

A retreat is often a time of spiritual strain, and there may be a danger of reaction on coming out of it. The retreatant should be on his guard against this, endeavouring to preserve a spirit of calmness and recollection. The warm and exalted feelings he may have had during the retreat will die away quietly of themselves. They were not meant to last. They were given for a time and for a special purpose: to help him to make a new start, or to do some difficult thing. When their work is done they

[1] This paragraph has been slightly altered from the original.

will pass away. But the lasting fruit of the retreat will be preserved in the resolutions he has made, and perseveres in carrying out. They should therefore be written down and read over from time to time, lest they should be forgotten, and they should be put into practice without delay.

APPENDIX II

Extracts from the Text of S. Ignatius

Title of the Exercises

Spiritual Exercises whereby to conquer oneself, and order one's life, without being influenced in one's decision by any inordinate affection.[1]

Principle and Foundation

Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul; and the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and in order to aid him in the prosecution of the end for which he was created. Whence it follows that man ought to make use of them just so far as they help him to attain his end, and that he ought to withdraw himself from them just so far as they hinder him. It is therefore necessary that we should make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in all that is left to the liberty of our free will, and is not forbidden; in such sort that we do not for our part wish for health rather than sickness, for wealth rather than poverty, for honour rather than dishonour, for a long life rather than a short one, and so in all other things, desiring and choosing only that which leads us more directly to the end for which we were created.

Note.—This Principle and Foundation consists of four propositions, each of which must be considered in relation to the others. The first, and most important, states the end for which man was created; the second lays down the end of creatures in relation to man; the third gives the primary rules for man's use of creatures; and the fourth declares the necessity of indifference if he is to act according to these rules.

[1] An inordinate affection is one which is not in harmony with the true end and purpose of our creation—the love and service of God—and is therefore a hindrance to the right ordering of one's life.

The first two propositions state principles or fundamental truths, of which the two following ones are the logical and practical consequences.

For the meaning of ' Creatures ' and of ' Indifference,' see the meditations on *The End and right Use of Creatures* in the first and third of these retreats.

I. [THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST]

The Call of the Temporal King helps to the Contemplation of the Life of the Eternal King

The first prelude is the composition, seeing the place. Here it will be to see with the eyes of the imagination the synagogues, towns, and villages through which Christ our Lord went preaching.

The second, to ask for the grace which I desire. Here it will be to ask grace from our Lord, that I may not be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish His most holy will.

The first point is to place before my eyes a human king chosen by God our Lord Himself, to whom all princes and all Christian men pay reverence and obedience.

The second is to consider how this king speaks to all his people, saying : 'My will is to conquer all the land of the infidels ; wherefore whosoever desires to come with me must be content with the food, drink, clothing, etc., that I have : in like manner he must labour as I do by day, and watch by night, etc., in order that hereafter he may share with me in the victory, according as he has shared in the toils.'

The third is to consider what good subjects ought to answer to a king so generous and so gracious ; and consequently, if any one should not accept the call of such a king, how he would deserve to be reprobated by all the world, and accounted as an unworthy knight.

The second part of this Exercise consists in applying the above example of the temporal king to Christ our Lord, according to the aforesaid points.

And as regards the first point, if we give heed to such a call of the temporal king to his subjects, how much more worthy of consideration is it to see Christ our Lord, the eternal King, and before Him the whole world, all of whom

and each one in particular He calls, and says : ' My will is to conquer the whole world and all My enemies, and thus to enter into the glory of My Father. Whosoever, therefore, desires to come with Me must labour with Me, in order that following Me in suffering, he may likewise follow Me in glory.'

The second point is to consider that all who have judgement and reason will offer their whole selves for the work.

The third point is that those who wish to show greater affection, and to distinguish themselves in entire devotion to the service of their eternal King and universal Lord, will not only offer themselves for the work, but also by acting against their own sensuality, and against their carnal and worldly love, will make offerings of greater worth and moment, saying :—

' Eternal Lord of all things, I make my oblation with Thy grace and help, in the presence of Thine infinite Goodness, and in the sight of Thy glorious Mother, and of all the saints of the heavenly court, protesting that I wish and desire, and that it is my deliberate determination (provided only it be to Thy greater service and praise), to imitate Thee in bearing all injuries, and all reproach, and all poverty, as well actual as spiritual, if only Thy Divine Majesty be pleased to choose and receive me to such a life and state.'

NOTE.—This Exercise, commonly called the Kingdom of Christ (though these words are not in the Spanish original), is intended by S. Ignatius to be a help to the contemplation of the life of Christ. It sets before us the purpose for which He came into the world and for which He calls us to follow Him, the conditions of following, the motives which should appeal to us, and the rewards of perseverance. Its primary purpose is to be a ' generating place of enthusiasm and personal loyalty to Christ, cost what it may.' [1] It should therefore be made in joy, and with a great desire to follow our Lord as closely as possible. We must bring to it something of the ardent spirit of the Crusader, whom S. Ignatius doubtless had in mind when he first made this meditation at Manresa, and drew out the similitude of the temporal king calling all men to follow him in his glorious enterprise.

[1] Father Rickaby, S.J., *Spiritual Exercises of S. Ignatius*, p. 83.

II. A MEDITATION ON TWO STANDARDS, THE ONE OF CHRIST, OUR SUPREME CAPTAIN AND LORD; THE OTHER OF LUCIFER, THE MORTAL ENEMY OF OUR HUMAN NATURE

THE first prelude is the history : here it will be how Christ calls and desires all to come under His Standard ; and Lucifer, on the contrary, under his.

The second is the composition, seeing the place : here it will be to see a vast plain embracing the whole region of Jerusalem, where the supreme Captain-General of the good is Christ our Lord ; and another plain, in the region of Babylon, where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer.

The third is to ask for what I desire : and here it will be to ask for knowledge of the deceits of the wicked chieftain, and for help to guard myself against them ; and for knowledge of the true life which the supreme and true Captain reveals, and for grace to imitate Him.

The first point is to picture to myself how the chieftain of all the enemy seats himself in the midst of that great plain of Babylon, as on a lofty throne of fire and smoke—horrible and terrible to behold.

The second to consider how he calls together innumerable demons, and how he disperses them some to one city, some to another, and so on throughout the whole world, omitting no provinces, places, states of life, nor any single individual.

The third is to consider the harangue which he makes to them, and how he admonishes them to ensnare men in nets and bind them with chains, bidding them first to tempt them with the lust of riches (as he is wont to do in most cases), in order that thereby they may more easily come to the vain honour of the world, and afterwards to unbounded pride : so that the first step is that of riches, the second of honour, the third of pride ; and from these three steps he leads on to all other vices.

In like manner, on the other hand, we are to picture the supreme and true Captain, who is Christ our Lord.

The first point is, to consider how Christ our Lord takes His stand on a great plain near Jerusalem, in a lowly place, fair and gracious to behold.

The second, to consider how the Lord of the whole world chooses so many persons, Apostles, disciples, etc., and sends them throughout the whole world, to spread abroad His sacred doctrine among all states and conditions of persons.

The third, to consider the address which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends whom He sends on this expedition, charging them that they should desire to help all, by drawing them first to most perfect spiritual poverty, and (if it should please His Divine Majesty and He should will to choose them) not less to actual poverty; secondly to a desire of reproaches and contempt, because from these two things results humility. So that there are three steps: the first, poverty, opposed to riches; the second, shame or contempt, opposed to worldly honour; the third, humility, opposed to pride; and from these three steps let them lead them on to all the other virtues.

A colloquy addressed to our Lady to obtain for me grace from her Son and Lord, that I may be received under His Standard; first, in most perfect spiritual poverty, and (if it should please His Divine Majesty, and He should will to elect and receive me) not less in actual poverty; secondly, in bearing reproaches and injuries, the better to imitate Him in these, provided only I can suffer them without sin on the part of any person, or displeasure of His Divine Majesty; and after this a *Hail Mary*.

To ask the same of the Son, that He may obtain it for me from the Father; and then to say an *Anima Christi*.

To ask the same of the Father, that He may grant it me; and to say an *Our Father*.

NOTE.—The purpose of this Exercise is not that we may choose under which standard we shall enlist, Christ's or Lucifer's. Any thought of such a deliberation would be dishonouring to our Lord, and altogether absurd at this point of the retreat. That question has been settled in the

earlier exercises, in which we have renounced the devil and all his works, and have renewed our allegiance to Christ as our only rightful King and Leader. Now, in this meditation on Two Standards, S. Ignatius shows us the manner of the warfare, the characters, principles, and aims of the two leaders, and the means which each uses to win men to his camp; and all this in order that on the one hand we may know the deceits and snares of Satan, who is always seeking to draw us away from Christ, and pray for help to guard against them; and on the other may learn, and be attracted by, the life and heavenly doctrine of Christ, in following whom we shall attain perfection in whatever state or kind of life He may call us to serve Him.

At the same time S. Ignatius takes occasion in this meditation to awaken love and zeal for souls, and to portray in outline the true spirit of the Apostolic ministry.

III. THREE CLASSES OF MEN

THE first prelude is the history, which is concerning three classes of men each of which has acquired ten thousand ducats,[1] not purely or duly for the love of God. They all desire to save their souls, and to find in peace God our Lord, by ridding themselves of the weight and impediment which they find thereto in their attachment to the thing acquired.

The second is the composition, seeing the place : it will be here to behold myself in the presence of God our Lord and all His saints, that I may desire and know that which is more pleasing to His Divine Goodness.

The third is to ask for what I desire : it will be here to beg for grace to choose that which may be more to the glory of His Divine Majesty and the salvation of my soul.

The first class would wish[2] to get rid of the affection which they have for the thing acquired, in order to find in peace God our Lord, and be able to save their souls ; but up to the hour of death they do not take the means.

The second desire to get rid of the affection, but they desire to do so in such a way as to remain in possession of what they have gained, so that God should come to what they desire ; and they do not resolve to relinquish the thing in order to go to God, although this would be the better state for them.

The third desire to get rid of the affection, but they desire to get rid of it in such a way as to be no more inclined to retain the thing acquired than not to retain it, desiring to will its retention, or not to will it, only according as God our Lord shall give them to will, and according as it shall seem to them better for the service and praise of His

[1] Honestly and legitimately, as the *Directory* points out (xxix. 4), otherwise of course no question about keeping the money could be entertained.

[2] i.e. if it could be done without costing a sacrifice.

Divine Majesty ; and meanwhile they wish to consider that they do actually leave all, striving with all their might not to wish for that or for any other thing, unless it be solely the service of God our Lord that moves them ; so that the desire of being better able to serve God our Lord may be what moves them to take or to leave the thing.

To make the same three colloquies as were made in the preceding contemplation on the Two Standards.

It is to be observed, that when we feel a shrinking from, or repugnance to, actual poverty, when in fact we are not indifferent to poverty or riches, it is a great help, in order to overcome such an inordinate affection, to beg in the colloquies (even though it be against the flesh)[1] that our Lord would elect us to actual poverty ; and to protest that we desire, beg, and supplicate it, provided only it may be to the service and praise of His Divine Goodness.

NOTE.—We have now firmly resolved to cleave to Jesus Christ and to fight manfully under His banner. And the scope of this meditation on Three Classes of men is to test the sincerity and strength of our resolution. Are we ready to place ourselves in the third or 'best' class? In other words, are we prepared 'to choose that which may be more to the glory of God and the salvation of our souls,' whatever it may cost us ?

S. Ignatius illustrates the dispositions of these three classes of persons by describing their conduct in the case of a call to part with wealth which they feel in their conscience is a hindrance to their spiritual life, and to their obedience to the promptings of grace. But we may apply the same principles to any other hindrance which stands in our way—a sin which holds us back from God, an inordinate affection which must be overcome, a sacrifice which we are reluctant to make. In all these cases there will be something like these classes. There will be three ways of answering to the call of conscience and of grace. (1) We may refuse, or delay till it is too late ; or (2) we may take a middle course, and try to satisfy our conscience with an insincere and half-hearted obedience ; or (3) we may resolve to take the highest course and do the will of God whatever it may cost us.

[1] i.e. against our lower nature and desires.

The *Directory*[1] (xxix. 7) suggests another illustration which may be used in this Exercise. We may imagine, it says, 'three sick persons, each of whom desires to get well; but the first will not use any remedies because of their bitterness, nor submit to any operation because of its pain. The second is willing to use some, but only such as he himself approves and judges fit, not those which are really suitable to his disease, as, for instance, abstaining from wine and the like. The third gives himself up entirely to the physician, and allows him to prescribe his diet, or to cauterize him, or even to amputate a diseased member if it should be needful.'

[1] This is an official body of instructions drawn up for the guidance of those who give the Exercises to others, issued by order of the General, A.D. 1599. An English translation of it may be found in *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, translated from the Spanish, with a Commentary*, by W. H. Longridge.

IV. THREE MODES OF HUMILITY

THE first Mode of Humility is necessary to eternal salvation : to wit, that I so abase and humble myself, as far as lies in my power, as in all things to obey the law of God our Lord, in such sort that though men would make me lord of all created things in the world, or for the preservation of my own temporal life, I would not enter into deliberation about breaking a commandment, whether divine or human, that binds me under mortal sin.

The second Mode is more perfect humility than the first : to wit, if I find myself in such a point[1] that I do not desire, nor feel myself attached to, riches more than poverty, honour more than dishonour, a long life more than a short one, when the service of God and the salvation of my soul are equal ;[2] and furthermore that not for all created things, nor should my life be endangered, would I enter into deliberation about committing a venial sin.

The third Mode is the most perfect humility : to wit, when the first and second Modes being included, and the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty being equal, in order better to imitate Christ our Lord and to become actually more like to Him, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches ; reproaches with Christ laden therewith, rather than honour ; and I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, who was first held to be such, rather than wise and prudent in this world.

NOTE.—In the third Mode of Humility (which presupposes the other two as a necessary preparation) we aspire to the highest degree of love and devotion, desiring, out of pure love to our Lord, to imitate Him in bearing poverty, reproaches,

[1] i.e. in such a disposition. The word seems to allude to a balance in which there is a point that marks the perfect equilibrium of the two scales.

[2] i.e. when God can be served, and my salvation secured, equally well in the one case as in the other.

and humiliations, even if we might equally glorify God, and save our souls, without such trials and mortifications.

The three Modes may be illustrated as follows :—

Suppose a man to be grievously injured in his goods or in his honour, or in both.

If he has attained to the first Mode, he will refuse to vindicate himself and his rights, if it cannot be done without mortal sin.

If he has attained to the second Mode, he will equally refuse to do so, if it would involve even venial sin.

If, however, he has attained to the third Mode, he will refuse to vindicate himself, even if he could do so without any sin at all ; and will count his loss as gain, and his dishonour as honour, rejoicing to suffer loss and shame for love of Christ, and in order to be more like Him, provided neither his office nor any other obligation demand that he should claim his rights or vindicate his character. See also the following places, S. Matthew v. 10–12 ; Acts v. 41 ; 1 Corinthians iv. 9–13 : 1 S. Peter iv. 13, 14.

S. Ignatius does not give this Exercise as a meditation, but as a consideration to be turned over in our minds while we contemplate the mysteries of our Lord's life, in order that we may be ' well affected towards the true doctrine of Christ our Lord,' i.e. may feel its supreme fitness and beauty, and be drawn to follow it as perfectly as we can. It is for this reason, and because it completes the number of the Capital Exercises, that it is printed here, although there is no meditation upon it in any of these retreats.

No devout and well-minded soul need be discouraged by this sublime though severe teaching. There are many degrees of perfection in each of the three Modes, and if the highest degrees are found only in the most saintly souls, yet every devout person may aspire to some degree even of the third ; for in truth it is only that same love of Christ crucified, which, in some degree, burns in the heart of every true Christian. To be altogether without it would argue a sadly low spiritual condition, and would certainly show that the retreatant had, at all events as yet, no vocation to the priesthood or to religious life. On the other hand, the fullest appreciation of the third Mode, and a strong attraction to it, are, as Father Rickaby warns us, no infallible proof of such a vocation. Perfection is not for priests and religious only, but for every generous soul.

For the reason why they are called ' Modes of Humility,' see *The Spiritual Exercises of S. Ignatius, with a Commentary*, by W. H. Longridge, p. 120.

Printed by A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd.
London and Oxford

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JAN 4 '78

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80592 271.5
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Longridge, W.H.

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Ignatian retreats.

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